

# Philosophy of Socialism

COMPILED WITH AN INTRODUCTION

*by*

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## INTRODUCTION

Philosophy is commonly considered to be a domain in which a few learned individuals indulge in the luxury of constructing and destroying imaginary worlds. The so-called practical people often sneer at philosophical discussion. Life is too short, they say, to allow us to enquire into the why and wherefore of things; it is best to take facts as they are. And yet everyone is in a way a philosopher. It is indeed impossible to find an individual who has no beliefs, convictions, prejudices or notions of good or bad. In fact, an average man has a fairly well defined set of values; his thought is governed by certain assumptions on the basis of which he explains everything, even the most complicated natural and social phenomena. It is these values, beliefs and assumptions which constitute a man's philosophical outlook. For, after all the real object of philosophy is to explain nature and society, to distinguish the real from the unreal and the cause from the effect. Thus, the individual has no choice whether he shall have philosophical beliefs or not, only the choice whether his philosophical beliefs shall be conscious or unconscious.

The subject-matter of philosophy is life as a whole, for the philosopher not only enquires into the multifarious relationships that exist in nature and

society, but also tries to find out as to how these relationships change. And in doing so he has to construct a world outlook.

Now, every great social movement has had its own philosophy. For, no such movement can really influence the conduct of men unless it enables its adherents to discover their own significance in this puzzling and intractable world. Thus, for example, all religions have attempted to build up theoretical systems which give a particular meaning to life as a whole. Other movements of a more secular nature have similarly attempted to find order behind the apparent chaos and uncertainties of every-day existence. Thus, at different stages in the evolution of human society, we find different ideologies arising out of the contemporary social and economic conditions and crystallising into philosophical systems. The importance and influence of these ideologies have changed with the passage of time, for changing social conditions have given rise to new world outlooks.

Socialism is by far the most important socio-political movement in the world today, and it aims, not at the reorganisation of any one particular aspect of society, but at the reconstruction of the entire social existence of man. It has therefore its own particular approach to the problems of life, which is fundamentally different from that of any system of thought that has preceded it.

Marx and Engels were the founders of modern Scientific Socialism and it was in the domain of philosophy that they first developed their new

outlook. In fact, it was through a criticism of the German philosophy of their time that they arrived at an understanding of the nature of society and the laws that govern it.

The philosophy of socialism as expounded by Marx and Engels is called Dialectical Materialism. We shall summarize below some of the main features of this philosophy.

The word materialism has been interpreted in a variety of ways. It is commonly believed that materialism implies either the assertion of the superiority of a life of sensual enjoyment over everything else, or the interpretation of all phenomena in terms of dead matter, regardless of what may be considered to be the spiritual or the higher side of life. Marx and Engels did not use the word materialism in either of these senses.

The question of the relation of thinking to being, or the relation of matter to mind, has been for centuries one of the basic problems of philosophy. The answer to this problem divided the philosophers into two big camps. There were, on the one hand, those who held that mind is primary and that matter is nothing but a creation of the activity of mind. This group of philosophers came to be described as Idealists and their school of thought as Idealism. On the other hand, there were those who asserted the primacy of matter and held that mind does not function independently of matter. These philosophers comprised the camp of Materialism. It is in this philosophical sense that Marx and Engels used the term materialism.

There were various schools of Materialism as of Idealism. The pre-Marxian materialists, interpreted the relation of matter to mind in a highly crude and machinistic manner. They, for example, separated mind from matter so rigidly as to make mind a distinct substance. This led to what is called dualism, that is, the existence of two separate worlds side by side, the physical world and the mental world, neither of them capable of influencing each other. The French materialists tried to get out of this untenable position by denying the very existence of mind. Then again, the earlier materialists often looked at matter as something static and failed to understand it in the process of development.

Marx and Engels discarded all the earlier materialist theories and developed a new theory, called Dialectical Materialism, which is based on a totally different interpretation of the structure of matter and the laws that govern its evolution. Dialectical Materialism is, in fact, the highest and the most scientific exposition of philosophical materialism.

How does the materialism of Marx and Engels differ from idealism?

Idealism, generally speaking, asserts that matter has no independent existence, and that it is, in fact, the creation of human mind. There being nothing like objective reality, it is our perceptions, sensations and ideas that determine our picture of the material world. As against this the materialist philosophy of Marx and Engels holds that matter

exists separately and independently of mind and that our sensations and ideas are conditioned by our material surroundings. Matter is primary while mind is secondary in the sense that thought is the product of brain, which is nothing but matter in a highly organised form. To consider mind and matter as two mutually exclusive categories is fundamentally incorrect. As Marx observed, "The material, sensuously perceptible world to which we ourselves belong is the only reality.....Our consciousness and thinking, however supra-sensuous they may seem, are the product of a material bodily organ, the brain. Matter is not a product of mind, but mind itself is merely the highest product of matter" (Karl Marx, *Selected Works*, English Edition, Vol. I, p. 435). Lenin described the Materialism of Marx as follows: "Materialism in general recognizes objectively real being (matter) as independent of consciousness, sensation, experience... Consciousness is only the reflection of being, at best, an approximately true (adequate, ideally exact) reflection of it" (Lenin, *Selected Works*, English Edition, Vol. XI, p. 377). Then again, "Matter is that which acting upon our sense organs, produces sensation; matter is the objective reality given to us in sensation... Matter, nature, being, the physical—is primary, and spirit, consciousness, sensation, the psychical—is secondary" (*Ibid.*, pp. 207, 208).

It is worth noting here that Marx and Engels did not deny the existence of mind as some of the earlier materialist did; what they maintained is that

mind does not exist and function independently of matter and that, in fact, it is matter which at a certain stage of development acquires the qualities of mind. Nor did Marx and Engels fail to recognise the influence of ideas over our material existence. They admitted that human thought plays an important role in the development of society, but what they emphatically denied is the belief held by idealists that thought is self-creating and sovereign recognising no limitations imposed by material conditions. According to Marx and Engels ideas have a great importance in human life, but all ideas are conditioned and governed primarily by the material surroundings in which they exist.

Consistent with its denial of the existence of objective reality, philosophical idealism holds that the world is unknowable; that there are no laws in nature and society which can be determined through scientific investigation. In other words, everything is indeterminate. Since our material existence is nothing but an illusion created by our sensations and perceptions, all scientific effort at the discovery of natural and social laws is meaningless and futile. Marx and Engels, on the other hand, held that it is possible for us to know and understand the world and its laws through scientific investigation based on experiment and practice. They maintained that all natural and social phenomena are governed by certain fundamental laws which are determinate. Things do not happen spontaneously, and every effect can be traced to a cause, provided all the necessary data for arriving at the objective truth is

available. In everyday life a hundred and one things happen which cannot be easily explained. This, however, does not mean that these things are inexplicable, it simply means that our knowledge is yet not so advanced as to enable us to explain them. With the development of the technique of scientific research the boundaries of human knowledge are extending and it is becoming easier everyday to discover the laws that obtain in nature and society. The Kantian hypothesis of "things-in-themselves," things which cannot be known, has been very effectively refuted by modern scientific practice. As Engels wrote: "The chemical substances produced in the bodies of plants and animals remained such 'things-in-themselves' until organic chemistry began to produce them one after another, whereupon the 'thing-in-itself' became a thing for us, as for instance, alizarine, the colouring matter of the madder, which we no longer trouble to grow in the madder roots in the field, but produce much more cheaply and simply from coal-tar" (Marx, Selected Works, English Edition, Vol. I, pp. 432-33).

Philosophical idealism assumes the existence of an all-pervading Mind, an "Absolute Idea" or a "Universal Spirit" which governs the universe. All natural and social phenomena are interpreted as reflecting the activity of this Mind. The materialism of Marx and Engels denies the existence of any such spiritual entity. It holds that everything in this world being fundamentally material all phenomena, whether in the realm of nature or of society,

represent matter in motion. There are definite laws directing the movement of matter, and all things develop and change in accordance with these laws. The hypothesis of a Universal Mind is not only unscientific but also unnecessary, because matter moves according to its own inherent tendencies and does not need a mind to guide its motion.

The materialist philosophy of Marx and Engels is dialectic. What does the word dialectic signify?

Amongst the ancient Greeks, dialectic was a method of reasoning according to which one could best arrive at truth by examining and overcoming the contradictions in the opponent's point of view. This method was popular with many Greek philosophers who, however, confined it to the realm of formal logic. It was Hegel who for the first time used the dialectical technique to explain natural and social phenomena.

Hegel believed that the universe is constantly expanding or unfolding itself. There is a succession of evolutionary levels, each level being higher and more perfect than the last. This evolutionary process conforms to certain principles of development, which may be described as dialectical principles.

The essence of dialectical evolution, according to Hegel is that change does not come about as a process of simple growth, but is born out of the contradictions that exist in things at any particular evolutionary level. Just as by bringing out and finally resolving the contradictions of a proposition we transform the original proposition, into some-



thing which is more perfect and near to truth, so life is being constantly pushed to ever higher levels as a result of the interaction of opposed forces. Nothing is permanent or perfect in nature and every stage in the course of evolution has within its womb the germs of its own destruction. There is a constant conflict between the old and the new, between what may be called thesis and its anti-thesis, leading eventually to the emergence of a synthesis which at a higher level harmonises the conflicting elements. But no sooner does this synthesis emerge, than new forces of conflict are born causing the repetition of the process of struggle and the eventual emergence of another synthesis.

Marx and Engels were strongly influenced by Hegel's philosophy and they accepted the Hegelian dialectical method, but their interpretation of the universe was fundamentally different from that of Hegel. Whereas for Hegel the unfolding of the universe is nothing but the development of an all-pervading Mind or the "Absolute Spirit," for Marx and Engels, evolution in nature and society takes place as a result of movement in matter, independently of any transcendental Mind or Spirit. Thus, while Hegel placed the dialectical technique at the service of idealism, Marx and Engels used this very technique to develop a new materialist philosophy.

What then are the essential features of the Marxian dialectical interpretation of the universe?

Dialectical Materialism holds that the world is in a process of constant change. Nothing is stagnant or immutable in life. Matter is continuously

moving. It evolves from stage to stage, giving rise to phenomena which are constantly changing. As Engels says, "All nature from the smallest thing to the biggest, from a grain of sand to the Sun, from the protista to man, is in a constant state of coming into being and going out of being, in a constant flux, in a ceaseless state of movement and change" (Engels' *Dialectics of Nature*).

In this process of continuous change, things do not happen accidentally. Nature is not a loose collection of mutually exclusive entities, but is an organic whole in which all phenomena are dependent on and connected with each other. Therefore every development has behind it a whole complex of causes. To understand life, one must study things in the course of their being and from the standpoint of their interdependence and interconnection.

All development in nature conforms to the laws of dialectic. There are inherent contradictions in all phenomena and it is the struggle of the opposite forces which grow on the basis of these contradictions, that constitutes the motive force behind evolutionary progress. Life evolves in a succession of stages, and each stage, though born out of the one that precedes it, is really new, having certain qualities which never existed before. Thus every thesis has its anti-thesis and the struggle between these two leads to a synthesis which itself becomes subject to the laws of dialectical development.

There are several important principles which

govern matter in the process of dialectical growth. The first is the principle of the Unity of Opposites. According to this principle everything contains within itself contradictory or opposite forces and tendencies. Take any phenomena and you will find that it unites certain opposites. For example, the atom is recognised today to consist of centres of positive and negative electricity, which are contradictory to each other but which by mutual interpenetration give the atom its physical and chemical content. It is also admitted by many scientists that chemical elements develop as a result of the contradictory movement of the atoms that compose them. One finds the principle of the co-existence of opposites most clearly demonstrated in the case of living organisms. Both in the life of any organism and in that of its component cells, contradictory tendencies represented by such phenomena as birth and death, growth and decay, assimilation and accretion exist side by side. Thus as Lenin observed: "The condition for understanding all world processes as in 'self movement', in spontaneous development conceived in its vital and living forms is the knowledge of the unity of their opposites. Development is in fact the conflict of opposites."

The second principle that governs the dialectical development of matter is the principle of the Transition of Quantity into Quality. Hegel had observed in his "Logic" that quantitative changes beyond a certain point develop into qualitative differences. This was recognised by Marx as being

true in the case of all natural and social phenomena. The quantity and quality of things are not independent of each other, in fact, they are both properties of the real world and are closely inter-connected. An oft-repeated illustration of this principle is the transformation brought about in the qualities of water if it is heated to the boiling point or cooled to the freezing point. In physiology this law is, of course, now universally recognised. As J. B. S. Haldane observes, "A hundred years ago it was commonly said that carbon dioxide was a poison, because a man died if he breathed pure carbon dioxide. Then J. S. Haldane found that a certain amount of this substance was essential for life. The normal amount in the blood corresponds to a pressure of about 5 per cent of an atmosphere. If this is either doubled or halved serious symptoms arise. In fact, too much of it is a poison, but a certain amount is a necessity" (J. B. S. Haldane, *The Marxist Philosophy and the Sciences*, pp. 31-32). In physics too quantization is today considered to be an important principle.

Another important law of Dialectical Materialism is what is called the Negation of the Negation. We have noted above that all matter according to the law of the unity of opposites "contains within itself contradictory forces and tendencies. These forces and tendencies are not in a state of rest; on the other hand they are constantly conflicting with or interpenetrating each other, and it is their interpenetration which is the main source of development or progress. The contradictory ele-

ments contained in matter negate each other in the sense that they exercise pulls in opposite directions, but at every stage there exists between them a certain co-relationship. This co-relationship is always in a state of flux. The actual content of the unity of opposites in every phenomena is continually changing as a result of the contradictory movement of these opposites. Nothing grows or develops without the impulse or the motive force provided by the clash of opposing elements, which condition and amplify each other. Thus the Negation of the Negation has fundamentally a positive character. It is one of the basic principles governing the emergence of every new stage in the evolutionary process.

Now, it may well be asked: how does the acceptance of Dialectical Materialism as a world outlook make any difference to our everyday conduct in life? Further, does this philosophy enable us to understand and solve the multiform problems of our society?

It should be well understood that Marx and Engels were opposed to all speculative and abstract thought which was divorced from the realities of life; in fact they constantly asserted the principle of the unity of theory and practice. Thus, as Marx observed in one of his theses on Feuerbach, "The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question. In practice man must prove the truth....." The philosophy of Dialectical Materialism is primarily a philosophy

of action. The oft-repeated statement of Marx that "The Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it" shows how for Marx the real test of any philosophy lay in its ability to guide and enlighten human conduct in the struggle for a better and happier world.

The application of the principles of Dialectical Materialism to social phenomena constitutes, perhaps, the most dynamic contribution of Marx and Engels to modern thought. Marx and Engels studied the history of society and discovered that social life is governed by the same principles of dialectical evolution as obtain in nature. This was, indeed, a revolutionary discovery, for, it not only shook to the roots all the metaphysical and religious conceptions of society, but also gave rise to a mighty world-wide socialist movement.

Dialectical Materialism when applied to Social history is called Historical Materialism. According to the theory of Historical Materialism there are no social phenomena which exist independently of their objective surroundings. As in nature, so in society there are no absolute or immutable categories, no eternal principles or ideas; everything is relative to its material environment. We cannot understand any social institution except in relation to the conditions under which it exists. Thus, what was true of an institution a hundred years ago may not be true today. The principle of absolute monarchy was, for example, a useful principle in medieval society as it served to maintain a certain amount of unity and cohesion in political life,

but today it is definitely a dangerous and undesirable principle. Similarly, the handicraft system of production could easily satisfy the material requirements of the people in a feudal society, and was, as such, socially justifiable then, but under modern conditions any attempt to revert from large scale manufacture to handicrafts would be a senseless and reactionary step not consistent with the best interests of society.

Society, like nature, is constantly developing and moving forward from stage to stage, and the driving causes of history are to be found in the material conditions of human existence. In every society the system of production constitutes the fundamental basis of social life, and all social institutions, morality, religion, art, philosophy etc. develop around the relations that obtain between various groups in the productive process. It is only when the forces and methods of production change that the whole social life and its ideological forms are transformed. This, however, does not mean that ideas and institutions have no influence over social development; it only means that ideas, theories and institutions do not come into existence independently of the material life of society, and that they do not change until the development of the productive system have given rise to new social tasks.

Social evolution conforms to the principles of dialectical growth. Thus at every stage society carries within its womb certain fundamental contradictions which constitute the basis of all social

development. These contradictions are connected with the system of production, for, changes in productive technique bring into existence forces and tendencies which come into conflict with the social relations and institutions based on the older methods and forms of production. The new forces constitute the anti-thesis of the older order and the conflict between the old and the new leads society on to a stage where the opposed elements are synthesised into a higher unity, which has its own character distinct from anything that has preceded it.

Since all social laws operate through the agency of living human beings, the conflict of opposite forces in productive life takes the form of a struggle between various classes of society. Changes in the methods of production find expression in the emergence of new social classes which become the vehicle for the working out of the new forces. Thus the history of society has been a history of class struggles.

Engels summarised the Theory of Historical Materialism as follows: "The new facts made imperative a new examination of all past history and then it was seen that all past history was the history of class struggles, that these warring classes of society are always the product of modes of production and exchange, in a word, of the economic conditions of their time; that therefore the economic structure of society always forms the real basis from which, in the last analysis, is to be explained the whole superstructure of legal and political institutions, as well as of the religious, philosophical and



other conceptions of each historical period. Now idealism was driven from its last refuge, the philosophy of history: now a materialistic conception of history was propounded, and the way found to explain man's consciousness by his being instead of, as heretofore, his being by his consciousness."

In the light of the above historical approach to social phenomena, Marx and Engels analysed the capitalist society and found that it was fast marching towards its doom. They held that capitalism is surcharged with internal contradictions, the most fundamental being the contradiction between the enormously developed forces of production and the antiquated framework of social relations within which productive enterprise is carried on. The development of productive technique under capitalism has created the basis for modern society to advance to a higher level of material existence, but the social forms which characterise the production and appropriation of wealth under capitalism are obstructing this development. Industrial crises, unemployment, wars and above all the sharpening of the conflict between the capitalists and the proletariat, the class which has been created by the modern productive technique and which, as such represents the new fundamental urges of society, is indicative of the growing maturity of a mighty social struggle which will eventually destroy the capitalist order and create a socialist society. For, the reorganisation of productive life on the principles of socialism is the logical and inevitable consequence of the changes in the forces

and modes of production brought about by capitalism. Thus, for Marx and Engels socialism is not a utopian dream but a historical necessity.

It will be seen even from the above sketchy and incomplete account that Dialectical Materialism is a highly comprehensive philosophy of life. To summarise its main features we may see that Dialectical Materialism dismisses as futile and illusory much that was written about the problems of being by earlier philosophers. Basing itself on science it presumes the existence of nothing behind matter and rejects all metaphysical thought. It holds that there is nothing mysterious or indeterminate in life; the world and its laws are knowable. The universe in which we live being real, time and change are also real. Everything is developing and moving forward; hence there are no absolute or eternal truths, and all values are relative. Both in nature and in society new phenomena are constantly emerging as a result of the dialectical process of development. The old order is always yielding place to the new and at certain stages this transition from the old to the new is so sudden and sharp that it involves a complete transformation in the quality of things. Social history is not a loose collection of 'accidents' but a process governed by definite laws. Though ideas and institutions are conditioned by the material circumstances of human existence, man does not play a passive role in society. He responds to the social exigencies created by material development and by conscious effort and struggle helps society



all abstract thoughts which did not stand the test of practice or experiment.

Of the philosophical works of Marx and Engels those which deserve mention are *The German Ideology*, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the outcome of Classical German Philosophy*, commonly known as *Feuerbach*, *Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science*, commonly called *Anti-Dühring*.

This book includes the full text of *Feuerbach*, which is by far the easiest to read, and certain important passages from *German Ideology* and *Anti-Dühring*. It has been designed to give an average reader a comprehensive and consistent account of the philosophy of Scientific Socialism from the pen of its founders.

January 24, 1940

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## IDEOLOGY IN GENERAL

BY MARX AND ENGELS

*The following is an extract from German Ideology written by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in 1845-46. It was not until 1932 that the full text of German Ideology was published by the Marx and Engels Institute, though parts of it were published in periodicals after Marx's death. This work of Marx and Engels was the result of their decision to "work out together the contrast between our view and the idealism of the German philosophy, in fact to settle our accounts with our former philosophic conscience" (MARX). It critically examines the post-Hegelian philosophy and is largely polemical in form. And yet it embodies a good deal of the positive philosophical thought of Marx and Engels and states clearly their differences with idealism and other schools of materialism. The passage reprinted below belongs to the first section of the book in which the materialist and the idealist conceptions are contrasted. This passage is important in so far as it reveals to us the fundamental approach of Marx and Engels to problems of philosophy.*

The premises from which we start are not arbitrary, they are not dogmas; they are real premises, from which abstraction can be made only in imagination. They are real individuals, their action and their material conditions of life, both those which they find in existence and those produced through their own action. These premises can therefore be verified in a purely empirical way.

The first premise of all human history is of course the existence of living human individuals.

The first fact to be established is therefore the physical organisation of these individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of nature. We cannot here, of course, go into either the physical characteristics of men themselves, or the natural conditions found by men—the geological, orohydrographical, climatic and other conditions. All historical work must start on the basis of these natural conditions and their modification in the course of history through the action of men.

Men may be distinguished from animals by consciousness, religion, or anything else. They begin to differentiate themselves from animals as soon as they begin to *produce* their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation. By producing their means of existence men indirectly produce their material life itself.

The mode in which men produce their means of existence depends in the first place on the nature of the means of existence themselves—those which they find at their disposal and have to reproduce.

This mode of production must not be considered merely from the aspect that it is the reproduction of the physical existence of individuals. It is rather, in fact, a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, their definite *mode of life*. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are therefore coincides with their production—*what* they produce as well as *how* they produce. What individuals are therefore depends on the material con-

ditions of their production.

This production first makes its appearance with the *increase of population*. It in turn itself presupposes *intercourse* of the individuals among themselves. The form of this intercourse is again determined by production.....

The fact is therefore that definite individuals, who are productively active in a definite way, enter into these definite social and political relations. In every single instance empirical observation must show the connection of the social and political structure with production—empirically and without any mystification and speculation. The social structure and the State always arise from the life-process of definite individuals, but of these individuals, not as they may appear in their own or other people's ideas, but as they really are, that is, as they act, produce in a material way, therefore as they produce under definite limitations, presuppositions and conditions which are material and independent of their will.

The production of ideas, concepts, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of actual life. Conception, thought, the mental intercourse of men, then still appear as the direct efflux of their material relations. The same is true of mental production, as expressed in the language of the politics, laws, morality, religion and metaphysics of a people. Men are the producers of their concepts, ideas, etc.—but real, producing men, as they are conditioned by a defi-

nite development of their productive forces and the intercourse, up to its most far-reaching forms, which corresponds with these. Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process. If in all ideology men and their relations appear upside down, as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the reversal of objects on the retina does from their directly physical life-process.

Indirect contrast to German philosophy, which descends from heaven to earth, here the ascent is made from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not start from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as described, thought of, imagined and conceived, in order thence and thereby to reach corporeal men; we start from real, active men, and from their life-process also show the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. Even the phantasmagoria in men's brains are necessary supplements of their material life-process, empirically demonstrable and bound up with material premises. Morals, religion, metaphysics and all other ideology and the corresponding forms of consciousness thus no longer maintain the appearance of independence. They have no history, they have no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, change, along with this their real existence, also their thinking and the products of their thought. It is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines conscious-



ness. In the first mode of observation, the starting point is consciousness taken as the living individual; in the second, in conformity with actual life, it is the real living individual himself, and consciousness is considered only as *his* consciousness.

This mode of observation is not without a basis. It sets out from real premises, and never for a moment leaves them. Its premises are men not in any imaginary isolation and state of fixation but in their actual empirically observable process of development in definite conditions. From the moment this active life-process is shown, history ceases to be a collection of dead facts, as it is with the empiricists, themselves still abstract, or an imaginary activity of imaginary persons, as it is with the idealists.

There, where speculation ends, with real life, real positive science therefore begins, the representation of practical activity, of the practical process of the development of men. The empty phrases of consciousness break off; real knowledge must take their place. With the representation of reality, independent philosophy loses the medium for its existence. Its place can at best be taken by a collection of the most general results which can be extracted from observation of men's historical development. The abstractions in themselves, separated from actual history, have absolutely no value. They can only serve to facilitate the arrangement of the historical material, to indicate the sequence of its separate strata. But they do not, like philosophy, in any way provide a recipe

or formula by which the historical epochs can be neatly trimmed. On the contrary, the difficulty begins precisely when a start is made with the examination and arrangement, the actual presentation, of the material, whether of a past epoch or of the present. The overcoming of these difficulties is conditioned by premises which cannot be given at this stage, but can only result from the study of the real life-process and the action of individuals of every epoch.

## SECTION I

# LUDWIG FEUERBACH AND THE OUT- COME OF CLASSICAL GERMAN PHILOSOPHY

By ENGELS

*"Ludwig Feuerbach" was written by Engels as a review of a book on Feuerbach by Starcke. It was first published as a series of articles in Die Neue Zeit in 1886. As will be seen from the Foreword, Engels undertook to write a comprehensive review of Feuerbach's philosophy in order to give a connected account of the relation of Dialectical Materialism to the philosophical doctrines of Hegel, and to acknowledge the influence which Feuerbach had upon Marx and himself. For, it may be noted, that Feuerbach, who studied under Hegel was one of the most outstanding personalities of the School of Left Hegelians. While the Right Hegelians, such as Weiss and the Younger Fichte utilised the theory of the real as rational for a justification of political absolutism and a belief in the doctrine of Providence, Feuerbach, Moleschott, Bauer and other Left Hegelians drifted away towards Scepticism and developed the "higher criticism" of the earlier days of Hegel. Marx and Engels freely acknowledged the debt they owed to Feuerbach, though they did not fail to point out the shortcomings of his outlook. Engels, while writing this critique of Feuerbach's philosophy, expounded most systematically the theory of Dialectical Materialism. Hence 'Ludwig Feuerbach' by Engels is considered to be one of the basic works on Marxian philosophy.*

## PREFACE

The present book is one of the latest of the philosophical works of Engels. Marx was already dead when it was written. It is *a consistently materialist book from cover to cover*, a book which blocks all attempts to distort Marxism into idealism or positivism. Engels in all his writings is of course a consistent dialectical materialist but in perhaps no other work has he with such *classical keenness* set materialism, as one of the *basic tendencies of philosophy*, in opposition to idealism, as the other *basic tendency*. At the same time he mercilessly combats the agnosticism of the English and German variety, Humism and Kantianism, a combat the issue of which is fatal to these *vacillating* tendencies. It is this classical keenness which Lenin, the pupil and compeer of Marx and Engels, characterised in the following words:—

The genius of Marx and Engels expressed itself in that they despised the pseudo-erudite play upon new words, wise terms, cunning "isms." They simply and explicitly said that there is a materialist and idealist division in philosophy, and between them there are various shades of agnosticism. The desire to find a "new" viewpoint in philosophy betrays the same poverty of spirit as the desire to create a "new" theory of value, or a "new" theory of rent. (Lenin: "Materialism and Empirio-Criticism," *Collected Works*, Vol. XIII, p. 117, English edition).

In Engel's *Feuerbach* we find all the basic questions of dialectical materialism treated in an inimitable, pellucid manner. The essence and tasks of philosophy, the essence of materialism, the critique of mechanical materialism, the essence of the dialectical method, the dialectical-materialist theory of cognition, the materialist conception of history, the origin of ideologies, including that of religion, the significance of ethical norms, etc.—all these are dealt with concisely, but at the same time in a form containing all essentials. In addition, the book discusses two further questions of equal importance: the relation of Marxism to Hegel and Feuerbach, and, as already stated, the question of agnosticism. The sole means of refuting the latter are provided by this book in that it points to *practice* as the criterion of truth.

The relation of Marxism to Hegel and Feuerbach seems to be purely a question of the history of philosophy. That, however, is not so. In the first place the Social-Democrats, with Bernstein at the head, constantly accused and accuse Marx of having become entangled in the "snares of Hegelian dialectics" and of having investigated reality not as it is but through the spectacles of Hegelian dialectics. This, they allege, explains how he arrived at revolutionary results which do not correspond to reality, and therefore assert that Marxism must be divested of idealist Hegelian dialectics, a constituent part of Marxism yet alien to it. On the other hand, Neo-Hegelianism is the philosophy of fascism which in the struggle against Marxism seeks to

galvanise into life the most reactionary sides of Hegelian philosophy. But to save Hegel's honour, which in their eyes is besmirched if the slightest contact between Marx and Hegel is recognised, it becomes necessary for them to deny the existence of any points of contact whatever between Marx and Hegel. Their chief argument is that Hegel was an idealist, whereas Marx was a "crude" materialist: How can there be anything in common between an absolute idealist and a pure materialist, even if it be but historical derivation?

Thus, on the one hand, every connection between Marx and Hegel is denied while, on the other, the Marxian dialectical method is identified with that of Hegel. The latter view is not even confined to the Social-Democrats. In the Soviet Union, too, there was a school which advocated this view under the leadership of A. Deborin. The discussion of dialectical materialism which recently was conducted in the columns of *Labour Monthly* is indicative of how widespread these views are. Mr. Caritt of Oxford University in this connection expressed the opinion that dialectical materialism was "the synthesis of Hegel's absolute idea and the matter of the materialist."

Nor is the question of the relation to the German philosopher, L. Feuerbach, a purely historical question: at the very outset that is not so, because here too the attempt was made to slur over the differences between Marxian and Feuerbachian materialism. Plekhanov, who of all the theoreticians of the Second International, was closest to

dialectical materialism (with certain reservations he may be designated a dialectical materialist), was always of the opinion that Marxism was nothing else but Feuerbachian materialism extended to history. The above-named A. Deborin, a disciple of Plekhanov, further distorted this view by prophesying that Feuerbach's day would still come, and almost metamorphosed Feuerbach into an historical materialist, and failed to take account of the fact that Feuerbach, in the domain of history, not only was no dialectical materialist, but was no materialist at all—was an idealist. And yet it is evident that Hegel, as well as Feuerbach, has been overcome by Marx and Engels, that they belong to past history and to past history alone and that their day cannot arrive. Hegel's revolutionary philosophy ushered in the political collapse at the time when the German bourgeoisie was preparing itself for the Revolution of 1848. In the epoch of this revolution, Feuerbach was the contemporary representative of "progressive bourgeois democracy or revolutionary bourgeois democracy." He "failed to understand" even the Revolution of 1848; his "socialism" was an "enlightener's atherism with a socialist tinge" (these are all words used by Lenin concerning Feuerbach). Marx and Engels by contrast were the representatives of the *revolutionary proletariat*. Precisely these social roots of the philosophy of Hegel and Feuerbach on the one hand and of Marx and Engels on the other indicate the profound and essential difference between these thinkers.

Space does not permit of a closer examination of these questions. Besides it would be superfluous. Engels presents in detail his own and Marx's relation to Hegel and Feuerbach. He describes how Hegelianism was Marx's and his own point of departure and how afterwards they took their leave of Hegelianism. At the same time he criticises Feuerbach's philosophy, recognising, however, the fact that during their period of storm and stress Feuerbach exerted a certain influence upon them and in many respects constituted an intermediate link between Hegelian philosophy and the conception of Marx and Engels.<sup>1</sup>

We call the attention of the reader in particular to the annihilating criticism of Engels directed against Kantianism and Humism, *i.e.*, agnosticism. For England and the United States this question is of vital importance even to-day. England is not only the cradle of agnosticism, not only did Humism never cease to survive there (it was in England, too, that Huxley coined the word agnosticism), but to this day all those philosophical tendencies which in England and the United States parade under the name of "philosophy," such as pragmatism, neo-realism, behaviourism, etc., are admittedly nothing but various shades of agnosticism. But all of them in the final analysis are rooted in the philosophy of Hume.

Let us substantiate this by quoting from Bertrand Russell, a philosophical writer who him-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Engel's Preface.—L. R.



self represents a "neutral monism" and thus in this question deserves a certain degree of confidence.

The view which I have suggested is that both mind and matter are structures composed of a more primitive stuff which is neither mental nor material. This view, called "neutral monism," is suggested in Mach's *Analysis of Sensations*, developed in William James's *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, and advocated by John Dewey, as well as Professor R. B. Parry and other American realists.<sup>1</sup>

Parallel with idealism, especially in its variety of the subjective idealism of Berkeley (Eddington, Jeans, etc.) we find Machist agnosticism prevalent in England as well as in the United States. Concerning this agnosticism, however, Lenin proved that it is rooted in Hume (and Berkeley). Therefore that part of Engels' book in which he refutes agnosticism merits the particular attention of the English or American reader.....

L. RUDES

## FOREWORD

In the Preface to the *Critique of Political Economy*, published in Berlin, 1859, Karl Marx relates how the two of us in Brussels in the year 1845 set about working out in common "the antithesis between our view,"—the materialist conception of history which was worked out especially by Marx—"and the ideological view of German philosophy, in fact settling accounts with our erstwhile philosophic conscience. The design was executed in the form of a critique of post-Hegelian philosophy. The manuscript, two big octavo volumes, had long reached its place of publication in Westphalia when we received news that altered circumstances did not permit of its being printed. We abandoned the manuscript to the gnawing criticism of mice all the more willingly since we had achieved our principal aim—our self-clarification."<sup>1</sup>

Since then more than forty years have elapsed and Marx died without either of us having had an opportunity of returning to the subject. We have expressed ourselves in various places regarding

<sup>1</sup> This MS. was published in full (with the exception of a few chapters which have been lost) in 1932 by the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, Moscow, under the title: *German Ideology*.

our relation to Hegel, but nowhere in a comprehensive, connected account. To Feuerbach, who in many respects forms an intermediate link between Hegelian philosophy and our conception, we never returned.

In the meantime the Marxist world outlook has found representatives far beyond the boundaries of Germany and Europe and in all the languages of the civilised world. On the other hand, classical German philosophy is experiencing a kind of rebirth abroad, especially in England and Scandinavia, and even in Germany itself people appear to be getting tired of the pauper's broth of eclecticism which is ladled out in the universities there under the name of philosophy.

In these circumstances a short, connected account of our relation to the Hegelian philosophy, of our point of departure as well as of our separation from it, appeared to me to be required more and more. Equally, a full acknowledgment of the influence which Feuerbach, more than any other post-Hegelian philosopher, had upon us during our period of storm and stress, appeared to me to be an undischarged debt of honour. I therefore willingly seized the opportunity when the editor of *Die Neue Zeit* asked me for a critical discussion of Starcke's book on Feuerbach. My contribution was published in that paper in the fourth and fifth numbers of 1886 and appears here in revised form as a separate publication.

Before sending these lines to press I have once again ferreted out and looked over the old manus-

cript of 1845-46. The section dealing with Feuerbach is incomplete. The completed portion consists of an exposition of the materialist conception of history which proves only how incomplete our knowledge of economic history was at that time. It contains no criticism of Feuerbach's doctrine itself; for the present purpose, therefore, it was unusable. On the other hand, in an old notebook of Marx's I have found the eleven theses on Feuerbach, printed here as an appendix. These are notes hurriedly scribbled down for later elaboration, absolutely not intended for publication, but they are invaluable as the first document in which is deposited the brilliant germ of the new world outlook.

LONDON

FREDERICK ENGELS

*February 21, 1888*

# LUDWIG FEUERBACH AND THE OUT- COME OF CLASSICAL GERMAN PHILOSOPHY

## FROM HEGEL TO FEUERBACH

The volume<sup>1</sup> before us carries us back to a period which, although in time no more than a full generation behind us, has become as foreign to the present generation in Germany as if it were already a hundred years old. Yet it was the period of Germany's preparation for the revolution of 1848, and all that has happened since then in Germany has been merely the continuation of 1848, merely the execution of the last will and testament of the revolution.

Just as in France in the eighteenth century, so in Germany in the nineteenth, a philosophical revolution ushered in the political collapse. But how different the two appeared! The French were in open combat against all official science, against the Church and often also against the State; their writings were printed across the frontier, in England or Holland, while they themselves were often in jeopardy of imprisonment in the Bastille. On the

<sup>1</sup> *Ludwig Feuerbach*, by C. N. Starcke, Ph. D., Stuttgart, Ferd. Enke, 1885.—*Note by F. Engels.*

other hand, the Germans were professors, state-appointed instructors of youth; their writings were recognised textbooks, and the terminating system of the whole development—the Hegelian system—was even raised, in some degree, to the rank of a royal, Prussian philosophy of state! Was it possible that a revolution could hide behind these professors, behind their obscure, pedantic phrases, their wearisome, ponderous sentences? Were not precisely those people who were then regarded as the representatives of the revolution, the liberals, the bitterest opponents of this brain-confusing philosophy? But what neither the government nor the liberals were able to see, was seen at least by one man as early as 1833, and this man was indeed none other than Heinrich Heine.<sup>1</sup>

Let us take an example. No philosophical proposition has earned more gratitude from narrow-minded governments and wrath from equally narrow-minded liberals than Hegel's famous statements: "All that is real is rational: and all that is rational is real." That was tangibly a sanctification of things that be, a philosophical benediction bestowed upon despotism, police-government, Star Chamber proceedings and censorship. That

<sup>1</sup> Engels refers to the articles *On Germany* written by the famous German poet Heine in which he expounded the history of the civilisation of the German people for the French public. He divided it into three parts: 1) before Luther; 2) from Luther to Kant; 3) from Kant to Hegel. These articles contain his characterisation of German philosophy and the role it filled in its day—*Ed.*

is how Frederick William III and his subjects understood it. But according to Hegel everything that exists is certainly not also *real*, without further qualification. For Hegel the attribute of reality belongs only to that which at the same time is necessary: "the reality proves itself to be the necessary in the course of its development." A particular governmental act—Hegel himself cites the example of "a certain tax regulation"—is therefore for him by no means real without qualification. That which is necessary, however, proves itself in the last resort to be also rational; and, applied to the Prussian state of that time, the Hegelian proposition therefore merely means: this state is rational, it corresponds to reason in so far as it is necessary; and if it nevertheless appears to us to be evil, but still, in spite of its evil character, it continues to exist, then the evil character of the government is explained and justified by the corresponding evil character of the subjects. The Prussians of that day had the government that they deserved.

Now, according to Hegel, reality is, however, in no way an attribute of any given state of affairs, social or political, in all circumstances and for all time. On the contrary. The Roman Republic was real, but so was the Roman Empire which superseded it. In 1789 the French monarchy had become so unreal, that is to say, it had been so robbed of all necessity, so non-rational, that it had to be destroyed by the great revolution—of which Hegel always speaks with the greatest enthusiasm. In this case the monarchy was the unreal and the

revolution was the real. And so, in the course of development, all that was previously real becomes unreal, loses its necessity, its right of existence, its rationality. And in the place of moribund reality comes a new reality capable of living—peacefully if the old has enough intelligence to go to its death without a struggle; forcibly if it resists this necessity. Thus the Hegelian proposition turns into its opposite through Hegelian dialectics itself: All that is real in the sphere of human history becomes irrational in the process of time and is therefore irrational already by its destination, is tainted beforehand with irrationality, and everything which is rational in the minds of men is destined to become real, however much it may contradict the apparent reality of existing conditions. In accordance with all the rules of the Hegelian method of thought, the proposition of the rationality of everything which is real resolves itself into the other proposition: all that exists has this much value, that it perishes.<sup>1</sup>

But precisely here lay the true significance and the revolutionary character of the Hegelian philosophy (to which, as the close of the whole movement since Kant, we must here confine ourselves), that it once and for all dealt the deathblow to the finality of all products of human thought and action. Truth, the cognition of which is the business of philosophy, became in the hands of Hegel no longer

<sup>1</sup> The words of Mephistopheles in Goethe's *Faust*: "*Alles, was besteht, ist wert, dass es zugrunde geht*"—Ed.



an aggregate of finished dogmatic statements which once discovered, had merely to be learned by heart. Truth lay now in the process of cognition itself, in the long historical development of science, which mounts from lower to ever higher levels of knowledge without ever reaching, by discovering so-called absolute truth,<sup>1</sup> a point at which it can proceed no further and where it would have nothing more to do than to fold its hands and admire the absolute truth to which it had attained. And what holds good for the realm of philosophic knowledge holds good also for that of every other kind of knowledge and also for practical affairs. Just as knowledge is unable to reach a perfected termination in a perfect, ideal condition of humanity, so is history unable to do so; a perfect society, a perfect "state," are things which can only exist in imagination. On the contrary, all successive historical situations are only transitory stages in the endless course of development of human society from the lower to the higher. Each stage is necessary, and therefore justified for the time and conditions to which it owes its origin. But in the newer and higher conditions which gradually develop in its own bosom, each loses its validity and justification. It must give way to a higher form which will also in its turn decay and perish. Just as the bourgeoisie by large-scale industry, com-

<sup>1</sup> Engels here has in view the metaphysical conception of absolute truth as completed, exhaustive knowledge, immutable for all time.—*Ed.*

petition and the world market dissolves in practice all stable, time-honoured institutions, so this dialectical philosophy dissolves all conceptions of final absolute truth, and of a final absolute state of humanity corresponding to it. For it nothing is final, absolute, sacred. It reveals the transitory character of everything and in everything; nothing can endure before it except the uninterrupted process of becoming and of passing away, of endless ascendancy from the lower to the higher. And dialectical philosophy itself is nothing more than the mere reflection of this process in the thinking brain. It has, of course, also a conservative side: it recognises that definite stages of knowledge and society are justified for their time and circumstances; but only so far. The conservatism of this mode of outlook is relative; its revolutionary character is absolute—the only absolute it admits.

It is not necessary, here, to go into the question of whether this mode of outlook is thoroughly in accord with the present position of natural science which predicts a possible end for the earth, and for its habitability a fairly certain one; which therefore recognises that for the history of humanity also there is not only an ascending but also a descending branch. At any rate we still find ourselves a considerable distance from the turning point at which the historical course of society becomes one of descent and we cannot expect Hegelian philosophy to be concerned with a subject which natural science, in its time, had not at all placed upon the agenda as yet!

But what must, in fact, be said here is this: that in Hegel the above development is not to be found in such precision. It is a necessary conclusion from his method but one which he himself never drew with such explicitness. And this, indeed, for the simple reason that he was compelled to make a system, and, in accordance with all the traditional requirements, a system of philosophy must conclude with some sort of Absolute Truth. Therefore, however much Hegel, especially in his *Logic*, emphasised that this eternal truth is nothing but the logical, *i.e.*, the historical process itself, he nevertheless finds himself compelled to make an end to this process, just because he has to bring his system to a termination at some point or other. In the *Logic* he can make this end a beginning again, since here the point of conclusion, the absolute idea<sup>1</sup>— which is only absolute in so far as he has absolutely nothing to say about it—“alienates,” that is transforms, itself into nature and comes to itself again later in the mind, *i.e.*, in thought and in history. But at the end of the whole philosophy a similar return to the beginning is possible only in one way, namely, by putting as the end of all history the arrival of mankind at the cognition of this self-same absolute idea, and by explaining that this cognition of the absolute idea is reached in Hegelian philosophy. In this way, however, the whole dogmatic content of the Hegelian system

<sup>1</sup> Under this Hegelian conception, the conception of god is concealed.—*Ed.*

is declared to be Absolute Truth, in contradiction to his dialectical method, which dissolves all dogmatism. Thus the revolutionary side becomes smothered beneath the overgrowth of the conservative side. And what applies to philosophical cognition applies also to historical practice. Mankind, which in the person of Hegel, has reached the point of working out the absolute idea, must also in practice have arrived so far that it can carry out this absolute idea in reality. Hence the practical political demands of the absolute idea on contemporaries may not be stretched too far. And so we find at the conclusion of the philosophy of law that the absolute idea is to be realised in that monarchy based on estates which Frederick William III so persistently but vainly promised to his subjects, *i.e.*, in a limited, moderate, indirect rule of the possessing classes suited to the petty-bourgeois German conditions of that time. Herewith also the necessity of the nobility is demonstrated to us in a speculative fashion.

The inner necessities of the system are therefore of themselves sufficient to explain why such a thoroughly revolutionary method of thinking produced such an extremely tame political conclusion. As a matter of fact the specific form of this conclusion springs from this, that Hegel was a German, and like his contemporary Goethe had a bit of the philistine's queue dangling behind. Each of them was an Olympian Zeus in his own sphere, yet neither of them ever quite freed himself from German philistinism.

But all this did not prevent the Hegelian system from covering an incomparably greater domain than any earlier system; nor from developing in this domain a wealth of thought which is astounding even today. The *Phenomenology of Mind* (which one may call a parallel of the embryology and palæontology of the mind, a development of the individual consciousness through its different stages, couched in the form of an abbreviated recapitulation of the stages through which the consciousness of man has passed in the course of history), logic, natural philosophy, philosophy of mind, and the latter worked out in its separate historical subdivisions: philosophy of history, of law, of religion, history of philosophy, aesthetics, etc.—in all these different historical fields Hegel laboured to discover and demonstrate the pervading thread of development. And as he was not only a creative genius but also a man of encyclopædic erudition, he played an epoch-making role in every sphere. It is self-evident that owing to the needs of the “system” he very often had to resort to those forced constructions about which his pigmy opponents make such a terrible fuss even today. But these constructions are only the frame and scaffolding of his work. If one does not loiter here needlessly, but presses on farther into the immense building, one finds innumerable treasures which today still possess undiminished value. With all philosophers it is precisely the “system” which is perishable; and for the simple reason that it springs from an imperishable desire of the human mind—the desire to over-

come all contradictions. But if all contradictions are once and for all disposed of, we shall have arrived at so-called absolute truth: world history will be at an end. And yet it has to continue, although there is nothing more left for it to do—thus, a new insoluble contradiction arises. As soon as we have once realised—and in the long run no one has helped us to realise it more than Hegel himself—that the task of philosophy thus stated means nothing but the task that a single philosopher should accomplish that which can only be accomplished by the entire human race in its progressive development—as soon as we realise that, there is an end of all philosophy in the hitherto accepted sense of the word. One leaves alone “absolute truth,” which is unattainable along this path or by any single individual; instead, one pursues attainable relative truths along the path of the positive sciences and the summation of their results by means of dialectical thinking. At any rate, with Hegel philosophy comes to an end: on the one hand, because in his system he comprehended its whole development in the most splendid fashion; and on the other hand, because, even if unconsciously, he showed us the way out of the labyrinth of “systems” to real positive knowledge of the world.

One can imagine what a tremendous effect this Hegelian system must have produced in the philosophy-tinged atmosphere of Germany. It was a triumphal procession which lasted for decades and which by no means came to a standstill on the death of Hegel. On the contrary, from 1830 to

1840 Hegelianism reigned most exclusively, and to a greater or less extent infected even its opponents. It was precisely in this period that Hegelian views, consciously or unconsciously, most extensively permeated the most diversified sciences and saturated even popular literature and the daily press from which the average "educated consciousness" derived its mental pabulum. But this victory along the whole front was only the prelude to an internal struggle.

As we have seen, the doctrine of Hegel, taken as a whole, left plenty of room for giving shelter to the most diverse practical party views. And in the theoretical Germany of that time, two things above all were practical: religion and politics. Whoever placed the chief emphasis on the Hegelian *system* could be fairly conservative in both spheres; whoever regarded the dialectical *method* as the main thing could belong to the most extreme opposition, both in politics and religion. Hegel himself, despite the fairly frequent outbursts of revolutionary wrath in his works, seemed on the whole to be more inclined to the conservative side. Indeed, his system had cost him much more "better work of thought" than his method. Towards the end of the 'thirties, the cleavage in the school became more and more apparent. The Left wing,<sup>1</sup> the so-called young Hegelians, in their fight with the pietist orthodox and feudal reactionaries, abandoned

<sup>1</sup> In contrast to the Right Hegelians who defended the conservative views and supported autocracy, the privileged

bit by bit that philosophical-aristocratic reserve in regard to the burning questions of the day which up to that time had secured state toleration and even protection for their teachings. And when, in 1840, orthodox pietism and absolutist feudal reaction ascended the throne with Frederick William IV, open partisanship became unavoidable. The fight was still carried on with philosophical weapons, but no longer for abstract philosophical aims. It turned directly on the destruction of traditional religion and of the existing state. And although in the *Deutsche Jahrbücher* the practical ends were still predominantly put forward in philosophical disguise, in the *Rheinische Zeitung*<sup>1</sup> of 1842 the young Hegelian school revealed itself directly as the philosophy of the aspiring radical bourgeoisie and still used the meagre cloak of philosophy only to deceive the censorship.

At that time, however, politics was a very

position of the nobility and the ruling religion (Protestantism), the young, or Left, Hegelians, headed by Bruno Bauer, endeavoured to draw atheist and revolutionary conclusions from Hegel's philosophy.—*Ed.*

<sup>1</sup> The *Deutsche Jahrbücher* (*German Annuals*) were magazines published in Leipzig by the Left Hegelians, A. Ruge and T. Echtermeyer, in 1838-43. The *Rheinische Zeitung* (*Rhenish Gazette*) 1842-43, was the organ of the Rhenish liberal bourgeois. K. Marx was one of the main contributors to the *Gazette*. From October 1842 to the end of the year Marx was its chief editor. Under Marx's leadership the *Gazette* assumed a decidedly radical character and was suppressed by the Prussian government at the end of March 1843.—*Ed.*



thorny field, and hence the main fight came to be directed against religion; this fight, particularly since 1840, was also indirectly political. Strauss' *Life of Jesus*, published in 1835, had provided the first impulse. The theory therein developed of the formation of the gospel myths was combated later by Bruno Bauer with the proof that a whole series of evangelical stories had been fabricated by the authors themselves. The controversy between these two was carried out in the philosophical disguise of a battle between "self-consciousness" and "substance."<sup>1</sup> The question whether the miracle stories of the gospels came into being through an unconscious-traditional myth-creation within the bosom of the community or whether they were fabricated by the evangelists themselves was magnified into the question whether, in world history, "substance" or "self-consciousness" was the decisive driving force. Finally came Stirner, the

<sup>1</sup> "Strauss in his book pictured Jesus as an outstanding historical personage and not as a god. Strauss considered the gospel stories to be myths which took shape in the Christian communities; he thus adhered to the opinion that these stories arose unconsciously, as it were. B. Bauer, in criticising Strauss, rebuked him for not crediting consciousness with the importance due it. In Bauer's opinion, the gospel myths in the historical process of their formation passed through the consciousness of the people who had composed them intentionally to accomplish this or that religious object" (G. Plekhanov). The "*self-consciousness*" which the young Hegelians brought to the fore, reflected the self-consciousness of the revolutionary-minded bourgeois intelligentsia of Germany during the pre-revolutionary epoch.—*Ed.*

prophet of contemporary anarchism—Bakunin has taken a great deal from him—and capped the sovereign “self-consciousness” by his sovereign “ego.”<sup>1</sup>

We will not go further into this side of the decomposition process of the Hegelian school. More important for us is the following: the main body of the most determined young Hegelians was, by the practical necessities of its fight against positive religion, driven back to Anglo-French materialism.<sup>2</sup> This brought it into conflict with its school system. While materialism conceives nature as the sole reality, nature in the Hegelian system represents merely the “alienation” of the absolute idea, so to say, a degradation of the idea. In all circumstances thinking and its thought-product, the idea, is here the primary, nature the

<sup>1</sup> Engels refers to Max Stirner’s (pseudonym for Caspar Schmidt) *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* (*The Ego and His Own*), which appeared in 1845. Marx and Engels criticised it in their *German Ideology*.—*Ed.*

<sup>2</sup> In the seventeenth century in Great Britain and in the eighteenth century in France, natural science and materialistic philosophy developed in connection with the development of the bourgeois method of production in these countries. (Bacon, Hobbes, Locke and others were representatives of English Materialism.) In France the Materialist philosophers of the eighteenth century (Diderot, Helvetius, Holbach, etc.)—representatives of the revolutionary bourgeoisie—conducted a relentless struggle against serfdom in institutions and ideas, making use of the lessons of the English revolution while being disciples and continuers of English materialism in philosophy.—*Ed.*

derived element, which only exist at all by the condescension of the idea. And in this contradiction they floundered as well or as ill as they could.

Then came Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*. With one blow it pulverised the contradiction, in that without circumlocutions it placed materialism on the throne again. Nature exists independently of all philosophy. It is the foundation upon which we human beings, ourselves products of nature, have grown up. Nothing exists outside nature and man, and the higher beings our religious fantasies have created are only the fantastic reflection of our own essence.

The spell was broken. The "system" was exploded and cast aside. And the contradiction, shown to exist only in our imagination, was dissolved. One must himself have experienced the liberating effect of this book to get an idea of it. Enthusiasm was general; we all became at once Feuerbachians. How enthusiastically Marx greeted the new conception and how much—in spite of all critical reservations—he was influenced by it one may read in *The Holy Family*<sup>1</sup>.

Even the shortcomings of the book contributed to its immediate effect. Its literary, some-

<sup>1</sup> The full title of the book of Marx and Engels is: *The Holy Family, or a Criticism of Critical Criticism against Bruno Bauer & Co.* "The Holy Family" is a humorous nickname for the Bauer brothers, philosophers, and their disciples. These gentlemen preached criticism, which stands above any reality, above parties and politics, rejecting all practical activity, and only "critically" contemplates the surrounding world

times even highflown, style secured for it a large public and was at any rate refreshing after long years of abstract and abstruse Hegelianising. The same is true of its extravagant deification of love, which, coming after the intolerable sovereign rule of "pure reason," had its excuse, if not justification. But what we must not forget is that it was precisely to these two weaknesses of Feuerbach that the "true socialism" which was spreading like a plague in "educated" Germany after 1844 became linked, putting literary phrases in the place of scientific knowledge, the liberation of mankind by means of "love" in place of the emancipation of the proletariat through the economic transformation of production—in short, losing itself in the nauseous fine writing and sentimentalising typified by Herr Karl Grün.<sup>1</sup>

Another thing we must not forget is this: the Hegelian school was broken up, but Hegelian philosophy was not overcome through criticism; Strauss and Bauer each took one of its sides and set it polemically against the other. Feuerbach broke

and the events which take place in it. Messrs Bauer and Co. judged the proletariat disdainfully as an uncritical mass. Marx and Engels decidedly attacked this absurd and harmful tendency. In the name of the worker—a real human personality, downtrodden by the ruling classes and the government—they called not for contemplation but for a struggle for a better order of society. They considered, of course the proletariat as the power that is capable of waging such a struggle and that is interested in it." (Lenin, *Marx-Engels-Marxism*, "Frederick Engels.")—*Ed.*

<sup>1</sup> For a characterisation of German "true socialism," see the Communist Manifesto.—*Ed.*

through the system and simply discarded it. But a philosophy is not disposed of by the mere assertion that it is false. And so powerful a work as Hegelian philosophy—which had exercised so enormous an influence on the intellectual development of the nation—did not allow itself to be disposed of by simply being ignored. It had to be “sublated” in its own sense, that is, in the sense that while its form had to be annihilated through criticism, the new content which had been won through it had to be saved. How this was brought about we shall see below.

But in the meantime the Revolution of 1848 thrust the whole of philosophy aside as unceremoniously as Feuerbach had himself thrust aside Hegel. And in the process Feuerbach himself was also pushed into the background.

## IDEALISM AND MATERIALISM

The great basic question of all philosophy, especially of modern philosophy, is that concerning the relation of thinking and being. From the very early times when men, still completely ignorant of the structure of their own bodies, under the stimulus of dream apparitions<sup>1</sup> came to believe that their thinking and sensation were not activities of their bodies, but of a distinct soul which inhabits the body and leaves it at death—from this time, men have been driven to reflect about the relation between this soul and the outside world. If in death it took leave of the body and lived on, there was no occasion to invent yet another distinct death for it. Thus arose the idea of its immortality which at that stage of development appeared not at all as a consolation but as a fate against which it was no use fighting, and often enough, as among the Greeks, as a positive misfortune. Not religious desire for consolation, but the quandary arising from the

<sup>1</sup> Among savages and lower barbarians the idea is still universal that the human forms which appear in dreams are souls which have temporarily left their bodies; the real man is therefore held responsible for acts committed by his dream apparition against the dreamer. Thus B. Imthurn found this belief current, for example, among the Indians of Guiana in 1884.—Note by F. Engels.

common universal ignorance of what to do with this soul (once its existence had been accepted) after the death of the body—led in a general way to the tedious notion of personal immortality. In an exactly similar manner the first gods arose through the personification of natural forces. And these gods in the further development of religions assumed more and more an extra-mundane form, until finally by a process of abstraction, I might almost say of distillation, occurring naturally in the course of man's intellectual development, out of the many more or less limited and mutually limiting gods there arose in the minds of men the idea of the one exclusive god of the monotheistic religions.

Thus the question of the relation of thinking to being, the relation of spirit to nature—the paramount question of the whole of philosophy—has, no less than all religion, its roots in the narrow-minded and ignorant notions of savagery. But this question could for the first time be put forward in its whole acuteness, could achieve its full significance only after European society had awakened from the long hibernation of the Christian Middle Ages. The question of the position of thinking in relation to being, a question which, by the way, had played a great part also in the scholasticism of the Middle Ages, the question: which is primary, spirit or nature—that question, in relation to the Church, was sharpened into this: “Did god create the world or has the world been in existence eternally?”

The answers which the philosophers gave to this question split them into two great camps. Those who asserted the primacy of spirit to nature and, therefore, in the last instance, assumed world creation in some form or other—(and among the philosophers Hegel, for example, this creation often becomes still more intricate and impossible than in Christianity)—comprised the camp of idealism. The others, who regarded nature as primary, belong to the various schools of materialism.

These two expressions, idealism and materialism, primarily signify nothing more than this; and here also they are not used in any other sense. What confusion arises when some other meaning is put into them will be seen below.

But the question of the relation of thinking and being has yet another side: in what relation do our thoughts about the world surrounding us stand to this world itself? Is our thinking capable of the cognition of the real world? Are we able in our ideas and notions of the real world to produce a correct reflection of reality? In philosophical language this question is called the question of the "identity of thinking and being," and the overwhelming majority of philosophers give an affirmative answer to this question. With Hegel, for example, its affirmation is self-evident: for what we perceive in the real world is precisely its thought-content—that which makes the world a gradual realisation of the absolute idea which absolute idea has existed somewhere from eternity independent of the world and before the world. But it is mani-



fest without more ado that thought can know a content which is from the outset a thought-content. It is equally manifest that what is here to be proved is already tacitly contained in the pre-supposition. But that in no way prevents Hegel from drawing the further conclusion from his proof of the identity of thinking and being that his philosophy, because it is correct for his own thinking is therefore the only correct one and that the identity of thinking and being must prove its validity by mankind immediately translating his philosophy from theory into practice and transforming the whole world according to Hegelian principles. This is an illusion which he shares with well-nigh all philosophers.

In addition there is yet another set<sup>1</sup> of different philosophers—those who question the possibility of any cognition (or at least of an exhaustive cognition) of the world. To them, among the moderns, belong Hume and Kant, and they have

<sup>1</sup> Engels calls the philosophy of Kant and Hume agnosticism. The agnostic says: "*I do not know* whether there is an objective reality which is reflected by our senses. It is possible that we can correctly perceive the properties of a thing but are not able to grasp the thing itself by any sense or thought process." The agnostics maintain that this "thing-in-itself" is beyond our ken. Engels therefore remarks: "To this Hegel has replied long ago: if you know all the qualities of a thing, you know the thing itself; nothing remains then but the fact that the said thing exists outside of us, and as soon as your senses have taught you this fact, you have grasped the last remnant of this thing, Kant's celebrated unknowable thing-in-itself." (Engels, *On Historical Materialism*).—Ed.

played a very important role in philosophical development. What is decisive in the refutation of this view has already been said by Hegel—in so far as this was possible from an idealist standpoint. The materialistic additions made by Feuerbach are more ingenious than profound. The most telling refutation of this as of all other philosophical fancies is practice, *viz.*, experiment and industry. If we are able to prove the correctness of our conception of a natural process by making it ourselves, bringing it into being out of its conditions and using it for our own purposes into the bargain then there is an end of the Kantian incomprehensible “thing-in-itself.” The chemical substances produced in the bodies of plants and animals remained just such “things-in-themselves” until organic chemistry began to produce them one after another, whereupon the “thing-in-itself” became a thing for us, as, for instance, alizarin, the colouring matter of the madder, which we no longer trouble to grow in the madder roots in the field but produce much more cheaply and simply from coal tar. For three hundred years the Copernican solar system was an hypothesis with a hundred, a thousand or ten thousand chances to one in its favour, but still always an hypothesis. But when Leverrier, by means of the data provided by this system, not only deduced the necessity of the existence of an unknown planet, but also calculated the position in the heavens which this planet must necessarily occupy, and when Galle really found this planet, the Copernican system was proved. If, nevertheless, the Neo-Kantians are

attempting to resurrect the Kantian conception in Germany and the agnostics that of Hume in England (where in fact it had never ceased to survive), this is—in view of their theoretical and practical refutation accomplished long ago—scientifically a regression and practically merely a shamefaced way of surreptitiously accepting materialism, while denying it before the world.<sup>1</sup>

But during this long period from Descartes to Hegel and from Hobbes to Feuerbach, the philosophers were by no means impelled, as they thought they were, solely by the force of pure reason. On the contrary. What really pushed them forward

<sup>1</sup> “The principal feature of the philosophy of Kant is an attempted reconciliation of materialism, and idealism a compromise between the claims of both, a fusion of heterogeneous and contrary philosophic tendencies into one system. When Kant admits that something outside of us—a thing-in-itself—corresponds to our perceptions he seems to be a materialist. When he, however, declares this thing-in-itself to be unknowable, transcendent, ‘trans-intelligible’—he appears to be an idealist. Regarding experience as the only source of our knowledge, Kant seems to be turning towards sensationalism and by way of sensationalism, under certain special conditions, toward materialism. Recognising the a-priority of space, time, and causality, etc., Kant seems to be turning towards idealism. Consistent materialists, and consistent idealists, as well as the ‘pure’ agnostics and Humists, criticise him for this inconsistency.” (*Lenin*, “Materialism and Empirio-Criticism,” *Collected Works*, Vol. XIII, p. 163, English edition.)

This dual philosophy was resurrected by the Neo-Kantians (Cohen, Natorp, etc.). Neo-Kantianism is in fact the philosophy of modern social-fascism (Max Adler, etc.).—*Ed.*

was the powerful and ever more rapidly onrushing progress of natural science and industry. Among the materialists this was plain on the surface, but the idealist systems also filled themselves more and more with a materialist content and attempted pantheistically<sup>1</sup> to reconcile the antithesis between mind and matter. Thus, ultimately, the Hegelian system represents merely a materialism idealistically turned upside down in method and content.

It is, therefore, comprehensible that Starcke in his characterisation of Feuerbach first of all investigates the latter's position in regard to this fundamental question of the relation of thinking and being. After a short introduction, in which the views of the preceding philosophers, particularly since Kant, are described in unnecessarily ponderous philosophical language, and in which Hegel, by an all too formalistic adherence to certain passages of his work, gets far less than his due, there follows a detailed description of the course of development of Feuerbach's "metaphysics" itself, as this course was reconstructed out of the sequence of those writings of this philosopher which have a bearing here. This description is industriously and carefully elaborated, only, like the whole book, it is loaded with ballast of philosophical phraseology by no means everywhere unavoidable, which is the more disturbing in its effect, the less the author keeps to the man-

<sup>1</sup> Pantheism—world outlook which identifies god with nature. Hegel was one of the most prominent representatives of pantheism.—*Ed.*

ner of expression of one and the same school, or even of Feuerbach himself, and the more he interjects expressions of very different schools—especially of the tendencies now rampant and calling themselves philosophical.

The course of evolution of Feuerbach is that of an Hegelian—a never quite orthodox Hegelian, it is true—into a materialist; an evolution which a definite stage necessitates a complete rupture with the idealist system of his predecessor. With irresistible force Feuerbach is finally forced to the realisation that the Hegelian pre-mundane existence of the “absolute idea,” the “pre-existence of the logical categories”<sup>1</sup> before the world existed, is nothing more than the fantastic survival of the belief in the

<sup>1</sup> In his *Logic*, Hegel classifies the principal conceptions as follows: being, becoming, quality, quantity, essence, appearance, possibility, accident, necessity, reality, etc. These abstract basic conceptions are called “logical categories.” According to Hegel, these categories have self-sustaining “eternal” existence, independent of man. In reality, conceptions and inferences are merely the reflection in man’s mind of the processes going on in the material world. “Categories of Logic are factors of the cognition (ideas) of nature by man.” “The practices of man repeated a billion times, become fixed in man’s consciousness as figures of logic. These figures have the endurance of prejudice, and are axiomatic in character precisely (and only) by virtue of this myriad repetition.” (Lenin, *Miscellany*, Vol. IX, pp. 230 and 267. Russian edition.) The “logical categories” are precisely the ideal of which Marx speaks in the Postscript to the second German edition of the first volume of *Capital*: “The ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind and translated into forms of thought.”—*Ed.*

existence of an extra-mundane creator; that the material, sensuously perceptible world to which we ourselves belong is the only reality; and that our consciousness and thinking, however suprasensuous they may seem, are the product of a material, bodily organ, the brain. Matter is not a product of mind, but mind itself is merely the highest product of matter. This is, of course, pure materialism. But, having got so far, Feuerbach stops short. He cannot overcome the customary philosophical prejudice, prejudice not against the thing but against the name materialism. He says: "To me materialism is the foundation of the edifice of human essence and knowledge, but, to me it is not what it is to the physiologist, to the natural scientist in the narrower sense, for example, Moleschott, and necessarily so indeed from their standpoint and profession, the building itself. Backwards I fully agree with the materialists; but not forwards."

Here Feuerbach lumps together the materialism that is a general world outlook resting upon a definite conception of the relation between matter and mind, and the special form in which this world outlook was expressed at a definite stage of historical development, *viz.*, in the eighteenth century. More than that, he confuses it with the shallow and vulgarised form in which the materialism of the eighteenth century continues to exist today in the minds of naturalists and physicians, the form which was preached on their tours in the 'fifties by Buchner, Vogt and Moleschott. But just as idealism underwent a series of stages of development, so

also did materialism. With each epoch-making discovery even in the sphere of natural science it has to change its form; and after history also was subjected to materialistic treatment, here also a new avenue of development has opened.<sup>1</sup>

The materialism of the last century was predominantly mechanical, because at that time, of all natural sciences, mechanics and indeed only the mechanics of solid bodies—celestial and terrestrial—in short, the mechanics of gravity, had come to any definite close. Chemistry at that time existed only in

<sup>1</sup> In this connection it is important to remember the following words of Comrade Stalin:

“Engels said that ‘materialism must take on a new aspect with each new great discovery.’ We all know that none other than Lenin fulfilled this task, as far as his own time was concerned, in his remarkable work, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*.

“It is well known that Plekhanov, who loved to chaff Lenin for his ‘lack of concern’ for matters of philosophy, did not even dare to make a serious attempt to undertake such a task.”

It is this “new aspect” of ‘materialism’ given by Lenin to the dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels which is properly designated as the “Leninist stage of Marxian philosophy”. The “new aspect” of materialism developed by Lenin is, of course, nothing more than the further development of the philosophy of Marx and Engels according to the development of the sciences primarily of the natural sciences, in the epoch in which Lenin lived. This must be accentuated, inasmuch as the social-fascists distort the facts by maintaining that Marxist philosophy and its Leninist aspect differ one from the other.—Ed.

its infantile, phlogistic form.<sup>1</sup> Biology still lay in swaddling clothes; vegetable and animal organisms had been only roughly examined and were explained as the result of purely mechanical causes. As the animal was to Descartes, so was man a machine to the materialists of the eighteenth century. This exclusive application of the standards of mechanics to processes of a chemical and organic nature—in which processes, it is true, the laws of mechanics are also valid, but are pushed into the background by other and higher laws—constitutes a specific, but at that time, inevitable limitation of classical French materialism.

The second specific limitation of this materialism lay in its inability to comprehend the universe as a process—as matter developing in an historical process. This was in accordance with the level of the natural science of that time, and with the metaphysical, *i.e.*, anti-dialectical manner of philosophising connected with it. Nature, it was known,

<sup>1</sup> According to this theory, the essence of combustion consisted in this: that a burning body gives off a special igneous substance called phlogiston. At the end of the eighteenth century, scientists were groping for another explanation of the process of combustion. Lavoisier, a French chemist, taking advantage of certain suggestions made by Priestley, an English chemist, advanced the theory that during combustion no secret substance such as phlogiston was being given off by the burning body, but that, on the contrary, a separate element, oxygen, unites with the burning body. By this discovery, as Engels says, Lavoisier “placed chemistry, which had so long stood on its head, squarely on its feet.” (Introduction by Engels to *Capital*, Vol. II.)—*Ed.*



was in constant motion. But according to the ideas of that time, this motion turned eternally in a circle and therefore never moved from the spot; it produced the same results over and over again. This conception was at that time inevitable. The Kantian theory of the origin of the solar system<sup>1</sup> had been put forward but recently and was regarded merely as a curiosity. The history of the development of the earth, geology, was still totally unknown, and the conception that the animate natural beings of today are the result of a long sequence of development from the simple to the complex could not at that time scientifically be put forward at all. The unhistorical view of nature was therefore inevitable. We have the less reason to reproach the philosophers of the eighteenth century on this account, since the same thing is found in Hegel. According to him, nature, as a mere "alienation" of the idea, is incapable of development in time—capable only of extending its manifoldness in space, so that it displays simultaneously and alongside of one another all the stages of development comprised in it, and is condemned to an eternal repetition of the same process. This absurdity of a development in space, but outside of time—the fundamental condition of all development—Hegel imposes upon nature just at the very time when geology, embryology, the physiology of plants and animals, and organic

<sup>1</sup> The theory which holds that the sun and the planets originated from revolving, incandescent nebulous masses.—*Ed.*

chemistry were being built up, and when everywhere on the basis of these new sciences brilliant foreshadowings of the later theory of evolution were appearing (*e.g.*, Goethe and Lamarck). But the system demanded it; hence the method, for the sake of the system, had to become untrue to itself.

This same unhistorical conception prevailed also in the domain of history. Here the struggle against the remnants of the Middle Ages blurred the view. The Middle Ages were regarded as a mere interruption of history by a thousand years of universal barbarism. The great progress made in the Middle Ages—the extension of the area of European culture, the bringing into existence there of great nations, capable of survival, and finally the enormous technical progress of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries—all this was not seen. Consequently a rational insight into the great historical inter-connections was made impossible, and history served at best as a collection of examples and illustrations for the use of philosophers.

The vulgarising pedlars who in Germany in the 'fifties busied themselves with materialism by no means overcame the limitations of their teachers. All the advances of natural science which had been made in the meantime served them only as new proofs against the existence of a creator of the world; and, in truth, it was quite outside their scope to develop the theory any further. Though idealism was at the end of its tether and was dealt a death blow by the Revolution of 1848, it had the satisfaction of seeing that materialism had for the mo-

ment fallen lower still. Feuerbach was unquestionably right when he refused to take responsibility for this materialism; only he should not have confounded the doctrines of these hedge-preachers with materialism in general.<sup>1</sup>

Here, however, two things must be pointed out.

First, during Feuerbach's lifetime, natural science was still involved in a process of violent fermentation—which only during the last fifteen years has reached a relatively clear conclusion. New scientific data were acquired to a hitherto unheard-of extent, but the establishing of inter-relations, and thereby the bringing of order into this chaos of discoveries following closely upon each other's heels has only quite recently become possible for the first time. It is true that Feuerbach had lived to see all three of the decisive discoveries—that of the cell, the transformation of energy and the theory of evolution named after Darwin. But how could the lonely philosopher, living in rural solitude, be able sufficiently to follow scientific developments in order to appreciate at their full value discoveries which scientists themselves at that time either contested or did not adequately know how to make use of? The blame for this falls solely upon the wretched conditions in Germany, in consequence of which cobweb-spinning

<sup>1</sup> At this point Engels' MS. originally had another draft which he later omitted. These pages are printed herein.

eclectic flea-crackers had taken possession of the chairs of philosophy, while Feuerbach, who towered above them all, had to rusticate and grow sour in a little village. It is therefore not Feuerbach's fault that the historical conception of nature, which had now become possible and which removed all the one-sidedness of French materialism, remained inaccessible to him.

Secondly, Feuerbach is quite correct in asserting that the exclusively natural-scientific materialism was indeed "the foundation of the edifice of human...knowledge, but...not...the building itself." For we live not only in nature but also in human society, and this also no less than nature has its history of development and its science. It was therefore a question of bringing the science of society (*i.e.*, the sum total of the so-called historical and philosophical sciences) into harmony with the materialist foundation, and of reconstructing it thereupon. But it did not fall to Feuerbach's lot to do this. In spite of the "foundation," he remained here bound by the traditional idealist fetters, a fact which he recognises in these words: "Backwards I...agree with the materialists; but not forwards!" But it was Feuerbach himself who did not go "forward" here, in the social domain, who did not get beyond his standpoint of 1840 or 1844. And this indeed was again chiefly due to his isolation—which compelled him, who, of all philosophers, was the most inclined to social intercourse, to produce thoughts out of his solitary head instead of in amicable and hostile encounters with

other men of his own calibre. Later we shall see in detail how much he remained an idealist in this sphere.

It need only be added here that Starcke looks for Feuerbach's idealism in the wrong place. "Feuerbach is an idealist; he believes in the progress of mankind" (p. 19). "The foundation, the substructure of the whole, remains nevertheless idealism. Realism for us is nothing more than a protection against wrong paths, while we follow our ideal trends. Are not compassion, love and enthusiasm for truth and justice ideal forces?" (p. viii).

In the first place, idealism here means nothing but the pursuit of "ideal" aims. But these necessarily have to do at the most with Kantian idealism and its "categorical imperative,"<sup>1</sup> but Kant himself called his philosophy "transcendental idealism" by no means because he dealt therein also with moral ideals, but for quite other reasons, as Starcke will remember. The superstition that philosophical idealism is pivoted round a belief in moral, *i.e.*, social, "ideals," arose outside philosophy,

<sup>1</sup> In Kantian philosophy this is the term applied to the law of ethics. In the words of Kant, two things produce the greatest impression upon him: the starry sky above us and the law of ethics within us. This law, in Kant's opinion, is immutable, is established for all eternity and imperiously prescribes to people their conduct. As a matter of fact, the practical philosophy of Kant was only the abstract ideological expression of bourgeois ethics and the seal of the weakness and immaturity of the German bourgeoisie was impressed upon it.—*Ed.*

among the German philistines who learned by heart from Schiller's poems the few morsels of philosophical culture they needed. No one has criticised more severely the impotent "categorical imperative" of Kant—impotent because it demands the impossible, and therefore never attains to any reality—no one has more cruelly derided the philistine sentimental enthusiasm for unrealisable ideals purveyed by Schiller than the complete idealist Hegel. (See, for example, his *Phenomenology*.)

In the second place, we cannot get away from the fact that everything that sets men acting must find its way through their brains—even eating and drinking, which begins as a consequence of the sensation of hunger or thirst transmitted through the brain, and ends as a result of the sensation of satisfaction likewise transmitted through the brain. The influences of the external world upon man express themselves in his brain, are reflected therein as feelings, thoughts, instincts, volitions—in short, as "ideal tendencies," and in this form become "ideal powers." If, then, a man is converted into an idealist because he "follows ideal tendencies" and admits that "ideal powers" have an influence over him—then every person who is at all normally developed is a born idealist and how, in that case, can there still be any materialist?

In the third place, the conviction that humanity, at least at the present moment, moves on the whole in a progressive direction, has absolutely nothing to do with the antithesis between materialism and idealism. The French materialists equally with the

deists<sup>1</sup> Voltaire and Rousseau held this conviction to an almost fanatical degree, and often made the greatest personal sacrifices for it. If ever anybody dedicated his whole life to the "enthusiasms for truth and justice"—using this phrase in the good sense—it was Diderot. If, therefore, Starcke declares all this to be "idealism," this merely proves that the word materialism has lost all meaning for him—as has also the whole antithesis between the two standpoints.

The fact is that Starcke, although perhaps unconsciously, in this makes an unpardonable concession to the traditional philistine prejudice against the word materialism resulting from the long-continued defamation by the priests. By the word materialism the philistine understands gluttony, drunkenness, lust of the eye, lust of the flesh, arrogance, cupidity, avarice, miserliness, profit-hunting and stock-exchange swindling—in short,

<sup>1</sup> Deism—A philosophical school inimical to the positive religions with their cult of a personal god but which does not completely reject the idea of god. This school retains god as the original cause of everything, as the force which gives the first impulse. The deists do not break finally with the idea of god as do the consistent materialists (who are atheists). The deists recognise a god who plays the same role as the king under the English constitution which is limited by laws which he cannot revoke without Parliament. Similarly the god of the deists, who according to them created nature, is limited by the laws of nature and cannot act arbitrarily, create miracles in contravention of these laws. Thus deism afforded the possibility of recognising the conclusions of materialism in inconsistent, concealed form.—*Ed.*

all the filthy vices in which he himself indulges in private. By the word idealism he understands the belief in virtue, universal philanthropy and in a general way a "better world," of which he boasts before others, but in which he himself at the utmost believes only so long as he is going through the depression or bankruptcy consequent upon his customary "materialist" excesses. It is then that he sings his favourite song, "What is man?—Half beast! Half angel!"

For the rest, Starcke takes great pains to defend Feuerbach against the attacks and doctrines of the vociferous lecturers who today go by the name of philosophers in Germany. For people who are interested in this afterbirth of German classical philosophy this is a matter of importance; for Starcke himself it may have appeared necessary. We, however, will spare the reader this.



## FEUERBACH'S PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION AND ETHICS

The real idealism of Feuerbach becomes evident as soon as we come to his philosophy of religion and ethics. He by no means wishes to abolish religion: he wants to perfect it. Philosophy itself must be absorbed in religion. "The periods of humanity are distinguished only by religious changes. An historical movement is fundamental only when it is rooted in the hearts of men. The heart is not a form of religion, so that the latter should exist also in the heart; the heart is the essence of religion." (Quoted by Starcke, p. 168, German edition.) According to Feuerbach, religion is the relation based on the affections, the relation based on the heart, between man and man, which until now has sought its truth in a fantastic reflection of reality—in the fantastic reflection of human qualities through the medium of one or many gods. But now it finds its truth directly and without any intermediary in the love between the "I" and the "Thou." Thus, finally, with Feuerbach sex love becomes one of the highest forms, if not the highest form, of the practice of his religion.

Now relations between man and man, based on affection, and especially between the sexes,

have existed as long as mankind has. Sex love in particular has undergone a development and won a place during the last eight hundred years which has made it a compulsory pivotal point of all poetry during this period. The existing positive religions have limited themselves in this matter to the bestowal of a higher consecration upon state-regulated sex love (*i.e.*, upon the marriage laws) and they could all disappear completely tomorrow without changing in the slightest the practice of love and friendship. The Christian religion in France was, as a matter of fact, so completely swept away in the years 1793-98 that even Napoleon could not re-introduce it without opposition and difficulty; and this without any desire for a substitute, in Feuerbach's sense, making itself felt in the interval.

Feuerbach's idealism consists here in this: he does not simply accept mutual relations based on reciprocal inclination between human beings, such as sex love, friendship, compassion, self-sacrifice, etc., as what they are in themselves—without associating them with any particular religion which to him, too, belongs to the past; but instead he asserts that they will come to their full realisation for the first time as soon as they are consecrated by the name of religion. The chief thing for him is not that these purely human relations exist, but that they shall be conceived of as the new, true religion. They are to have full value only after they have been marked with a religious stamp. Religion is derived from *religare*

and meant originally "abond." Therefore, every bond between two men is a religion. Such etymological tricks are the last resource of idealist philosophy. Not what the word has meant according to the historical development of its actual use, but what it ought to mean according to its derivation is what counts. And so sex love and the intercourse between the sexes is apotheosised to a "religion", merely in order that the word religion, which is so dear to idealistic memories, may not disappear from the language. The Parisian reformers of the type of Louis Blanc used to speak in precisely the same way in the 'forties. They likewise could conceive of a man without religion only a monster, and used to say: "*Donc, l'athéisme c'est votre religion !*"<sup>1</sup> If Feuerbach wishes to establish a true religion upon the basis of an essentially materialist conception of nature, that is the same as regarding modern chemistry as true alchemy. If religion can exist without its god, alchemy can exist without its philosopher's stone. By the way, there exists a very close connection between alchemy and religion. The philosopher's stone has many god-like properties and the Egyptian-Greek alchemists of the first two centuries of our era contributed their share to the development of Christian doctrines, as the data given by Kopp and Berthelot have proved.

Feuerbach's assertion that "the periods of human development are distinguished only by

<sup>1</sup> Well, then, atheism is your religion!—*Ed.*

religious changes" is decidedly false. Great historical turning points have been *accompanied* by religious changes only so far as the three world religions which have existed up to the present—Buddhism, Christianity and Islam—are concerned. The old primitive tribal and national religions did not proselytise and lost all their power of resistance as soon as the independence of the tribe or people was lost. For the Germans it was sufficient to have simple contact with the decaying Roman Empire and with its newly adopted Christian world-religion which fitted its economic, political and ideological conditions. Only with these more or less artificially created world religions, particularly Christianity and Islam, do we find that general historical movements acquire a religious imprint. Even in regard to Christianity the religious stamp in revolutions of really universal significance is restricted to the first stages of the struggle for the emancipation of the bourgeoisie—from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries—and is to be accounted for not as Feuerbach thinks by the hearts of men and their religious needs but by the entire previous history of the Middle Ages which knew no other form of ideology than religion and theology. But when the bourgeoisie of the eighteenth century was strengthened enough likewise to possess an ideology of its own, suited to its own class standpoint, it made its great and conclusive revolution, the French, appealing exclusively to juristic and political ideas, and troubling itself with religion only

in so far as this stood in its way. But it never occurred to it to put a new religion in place of the old. Everyone knows how Robespierre failed in his attempt.

The possibility of purely human sentiments in the intercourse with other human beings has nowadays been sufficiently curtailed by the society in which we live, which is based upon class antagonism and class rule. We have therefore no reason to curtail it still more by exalting these sentiments to a religion. And similarly the understanding of the great historical class struggles has already been sufficiently obscured by current historiography, particularly in Germany, so that there is also no need for us to make such an understanding totally impossible by transforming the history of these struggles into a mere appendix of ecclesiastical history. Already here it becomes evident how far today we have moved beyond Feuerbach. His "finest passages" in glorification of his new religion of love are totally unreadable today.

The only religion which Feuerbach examines seriously is Christianity, the world-religion of the occident based upon monotheism. He proves that the Christian god is only a fantastic reflection, a mirror-image, of man. Now, this god is, however, himself the product of a tedious process of abstraction, the concentrated quintessence of the numerous earlier tribal and national gods. And man, whose image this god is, is therefore also not a real man, but likewise the quintessence of the numerous real men, man in the abstract, there-

fore himself again a mental image. The same Feuerbach who, on every page, preaches sensuousness, absorption in the concrete, in actuality, becomes thoroughly abstract as soon as he begins to talk of any other than mere sex relations between human beings.

Of these relations only one aspect appeals to him: morality. And here Feuerbach's astonishing poverty when compared with Hegel again becomes striking. The latter's ethics or doctrine of moral conduct is the philosophy of law and embraces: 1) abstract right; 2) morality; 3) moral conduct under which again are comprised: the family, civil society and the state. Here the content is as realistic as the form is idealistic. Besides morality the whole sphere of law, economy, politics is here included. With Feuerbach it is just the reverse. In form he is realistic since he takes his start from man; but there is absolutely no mention of the world in which this man lives; hence this "man" remains always the same abstract man who occupied the field in the philosophy of religion. For this man is not born of woman: he issues, as from a chrysalis, from the god of the monotheistic religions. He therefore does not live in a real world historically created and historically determined. It is true he has intercourse with other men, but each one of them is, however, just as much an abstraction as he himself is. In the *Philosophy of Religion* we still had men and women, but in the *Ethics* even this last distinction disappears altogether. Feuerbach, to be sure, at long intervals makes such statements

as: "A man thinks differently in a palace and in a hut." "If because of hunger, of misery, you have no food stuff in your body, you likewise have no stuff for morality in your head or heart." "Politics must become our religion," etc. But Feuerbach is absolutely incapable of achieving anything with these remarks. They remain purely figures of speech; and even Starcke has to admit that for Feuerbach politics constituted an impassable frontier and the science of society, sociology, was *terra incognita*<sup>1</sup> to him.

He appears just as superficial, in comparison with Hegel, in his treatment of the antithesis of good and evil. "One believes one is saying something great," Hegel remarks, "If one says that 'man is naturally good.' But one forgets that one says something far greater when one says 'man is naturally evil.'" According to Hegel, evil is the form in which the motive force of historical development presents itself. This, indeed, contains the twofold significance that while, on the one hand, each new advance necessarily appears as a sacrilege against things hallowed, as a rebellion against conditions which, however old and moribund, have still been sanctified by custom; on the other hand, it is precisely the wicked passions of man—greed and lust for power—which, since the emergence of class antagonisms, serve as levers of historical development—a fact of which the history of feudalism and of the bourgeoisie, for example,

<sup>1</sup> Unknown land.—*Ed.*

constitutes a single continual proof. But it does not occur to Feuerbach to investigate the historical role of moral evil. To him history is altogether a mysterious domain in which he feels ill at ease. Even his dictum: "Man as he sprang originally from nature was only a mere creature of nature, not a man. Man is a product of men, of culture, of history"—even this dictum with him remains absolutely sterile.

What Feuerbach has to tell us about morals can, therefore, only be extremely meagre. The urge towards happiness is innate in man, and must therefore form the basis of all morals. But the urge towards happiness is subject to a double correction. First, by the natural consequences of our actions: after the debauch come the "blues," and habitual excess is followed by illness. Secondly, by its social consequences: if we do not respect the similar urge of other people towards happiness they will defend themselves, and so interfere with our own urge towards happiness.

Consequently, in order to satisfy our urge, we must be in a position to appreciate rightly the results of our conduct and must likewise allow others an equal right to seek happiness. Rational self-restraint with regard to ourselves, and love—again and again love!—in our intercourse with others—these are the basic laws of Feuerbach's morality; from them all others are derived. And neither the most talented utterances of Feuerbach nor the strongest eulogies of Starcke, can hide the tenuity and superficiality of these few



propositions.

Only very exceptionally, and in no case to his and other people's profit, can an individual satisfy his urge towards happiness by preoccupation with himself. Rather it requires pre-occupation with the outside world, means to satisfy his needs, that is to say means of subsistence, an individual of the opposite sex, books, conversation, argument, activities, articles for use and working up. Feuerbach's morality either presupposes that these means and objects of satisfaction are given to every individual as a matter of course, or else it offers only inapplicable good advice and is therefore not worth a brass farthing to people who are without these means. And Feuerbach himself states this in the dry words: "A man thinks differently in a palace and in a hut. If because of hunger, of misery, you have no food stuff in your body you likewise have no stuff for morality in your head or heart."

Do matters fare any better in regard to the equal right of others to the pursuit of happiness? Feuerbach posed this claim as absolute, as holding good in all times and circumstances. But since when has it been valid? Was there ever in antiquity between slaves and masters, or in the Middle Ages between serfs and barons, any talk about an equal right to the pursuit of happiness? Was not the urge towards happiness of the oppressed class sacrificed ruthlessly and "by right of law" to the interests of the ruling class?—Yes, that was indeed immoral; nowadays, however, equality of

rights is recognised—recognised in words, since the bourgeoisie, in its fight against feudalism and in the development of capitalist production, was compelled to abolish all privileges of estate, *i.e.*, personal privileges, and to introduce the equality of all individuals before the law, first in the sphere of private law, then gradually also in the sphere of state law. But the urge towards happiness thrives only to a trivial extent on ideal rights. To the greatest extent of all it thrives on material means; and capitalist production takes care to ensure that the great majority of those with equal rights shall get only what is essential for bare existence. Capitalist production has therefore little more respect, if indeed any more, for the “equal right to the pursuit of happiness” of the majority than had slavery or serfdom. And are we better off in regard to the mental means to happiness, the educational means? Is not “the schoolmaster of Sadowa”<sup>1</sup> himself a mythical person?

More than that. According to Feuerbach’s theory of morals the Stock Exchange is the highest temple of moral conduct provided only that one always speculates correctly! If my urge towards happiness leads me to the Stock Exchange, and if there I correctly gauge the consequences of my actions so that only agreeable results and no disadvantages ensue, that is, if I always win, then I

<sup>1</sup> The victory of Königgrätz (Sadowa) was called a victory of the Prussian schoolmaster, *i.e.*, of the superior Prussian culture.—*Ed.*

am fulfilling Feuerbach's precept. Moreover, I do not thereby interfere with the equal right of another person to pursue his happiness: for that other man went to the Exchange just as voluntarily as I did and in concluding the speculative transaction with me he has followed his urge towards happiness as I have followed mine. Should he lose his money, then by that very fact his activity is proved to have been immoral, because of his bad reckoning, and since I have given him the punishment he deserves, I can even slap my chest proudly, like a modern Rhadamanthus.<sup>1</sup> Love, too, rules on the Stock Exchange, in so far as it is not simply a sentimental figure of speech, for each finds in others the satisfaction of his own urge towards happiness, which is just what love ought to achieve and how it acts in practice. And if I gamble with correct prevision of the consequences of my operations, and therefore with success, I fulfil all the strictest injunctions of Feuerbachian morality—and become a rich man into the bargain. In other words, Feuerbach's morality is cut exactly to the pattern of modern capitalist society, little as Feuerbach himself might imagine or desire it.

But love!—yes, with Feuerbach, love is everywhere and at all times the wonder-working god who should help to surmount all difficulties of practical life—and that in a society which is split

<sup>1</sup> According to Greek mythology, Rhadamanthus was appointed judge in hell because of his righteousness.  
—Ed.

into classes with diametrically opposite interests. At this point the last relic of its revolutionary character disappears from the philosophy, leaving only the old cant: Love one another—fall into each other's arms regardless of distinctions of sex or estate—a universal orgy of reconciliation.

In short, the Feuerbachian theory of morals fares like all its predecessors. It is designed to suit all periods, all peoples and all conditions, and precisely for that reason it is never and nowhere applicable. It remains, as regards the real world, as powerless as Kant's categorical imperative. In reality every class, even every profession, has its own morality, and even this it violates whenever it can do so with impunity. And "love", which is to unite all, manifests itself in wars, altercations, law-suits, domestic broils, divorces and every possible exploitation of one by another.

Now how was it possible that the powerful impetus given by Feuerbach turned out to be so unfruitful for himself? For the simple reason that Feuerbach himself never contrives to escape from the realm of abstraction—for which he has a deadly hatred—into that of living reality. He clings hard to nature and humanity; but nature and humanity remain always mere words with him. He is incapable of telling us anything definite either about real nature or real men. But from the abstract men of Feuerbach one arrives at real living men only when one considers them as participants in history. And that is what Feuerbach resisted, and therefore the year 1848, which

he did not understand, signified for him merely the final break with the real world, retirement into solitude. The blame for this again chiefly falls on the conditions then obtaining in Germany, which condemned him to rot away miserably.

But the step which Feuerbach did not take nevertheless had to be taken. The cult of abstract man which formed the kernel of Feuerbach's new religion had to be replaced by the science of real men and of their historical development. This further development of Feuerbach's standpoint beyond Feuerbach himself was inaugurated by Marx in 1845 in the *Holy Family*.

## DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

Strauss, Bauer, Stirner, Feuerbach—these were the offshoots of Hegelian philosophy, in so far as they did not abandon the field of philosophy. Strauss, after his *Life of Jesus* and *Dogmatics*, produced only literary studies in philosophy and ecclesiastical history after the fashion of Renan. Bauer only achieved something in the field of the history of the origin of Christianity, though what he did here was important. Stirner remained a curiosity, even after Bakunin blended him with Proudhon and labelled the blend “anarchism.” Feuerbach alone was of significance as a philosopher. But not only did philosophy—claimed to soar above all sciences and to be the all comprehensive science of sciences—remain for him as impassable barrier, an unassailable holy thing, but as a philosopher, too, he stopped half-way; the lower half of him was materialist, the upper half idealist. He was incapable of disposing of Hegel through criticism; he simply threw him aside as useless, while he himself, compared with the encyclopædic wealth of the Hegelian system, achieved nothing positive beyond a grandiloquent religion of love and a meagre, impotent system of morals.

Out of the dissolution of the Hegelian school, however, there developed still another tendency,

the only one which has borne real fruit. And this tendency is essentially connected with the name of Marx.<sup>1</sup>

The separation from the Hegelian school was here also the result of a return to the materialist standpoint. That means it was resolved to comprehend the real world—nature and history—just as it presents itself to everyone who approaches it free from pre-conceived idealist fancies. It was decided relentlessly to sacrifice every idealist fancy which could not be brought into harmony with the facts conceived in their own and not in a fantastic connection. And materialism means nothing more than this. But here the materialistic world outlook was taken really seriously for the first time and was carried through consistently—at least

<sup>1</sup> Here I may be permitted to make a personal explanation. Lately repeated reference has been made to my share in this theory, and so I can hardly avoid saying a few words here to settle this particular point. I cannot deny that both before and during my forty years' collaboration with Marx I had certain independent share in laying the formulations, and more particularly in elaborating the theory. But the greater part of its leading basic principles, particularly in the realm of economics and history, and, above all, its final, clear formulation, belong to Marx. What I contributed—at any rate with the exception of a few special studies—Marx could very well have done without me. What Marx accomplished I would not have achieved. Marx stood higher, saw farther, and took a wider and quicker view than all the rest of us. Marx was a genius; we others were at best talented. Without him the theory would not be what it is today. It therefore rightly bears his name.—*Note by F. Engels.*

in its basic features—in all domains of knowledge concerned.

Hegel was not simply put aside. On the contrary, one started out from his revolutionary side described above, from the dialectical method. But in its Hegelian form this method was unusable. According to Hegel, dialectics is the self-development of the concept. The absolute concept does not only exist—where unknown—from eternity, it is also the actual living soul of the whole existing world. It develops into itself through all the preliminary stages which are treated at length in the *Logic* and which are all included in it. Then it “alienates” itself by changing into nature, where, without consciousness of itself, disguised as the necessity of nature, it goes through a new development and finally comes again to self-consciousness in man. This self-consciousness then elaborates itself again in history from the crude form until finally the absolute concept again comes to itself completely in the Hegelian philosophy. According to Hegel, therefore, the dialectical development apparent in nature and history, *i.e.*, the causal interconnection of the progressive movement from the lower to the higher, which asserts itself through all zig-zag movements and temporary setbacks, is only a miserable copy of the self-movement of the concept going on from eternity, no one knows where, but at all events independently of any thinking human brain. This ideological reversal had to be done away with. We comprehended the concepts in our heads once more materialistically



—as images of real things, instead of regarding the real things as images of this or that stage of development of the absolute concept. Thus dialectics reduced itself to the science of the general laws of motion—both of the external world and of human thought—two sets of laws which are identical in substance, but differ in their expression in so far as the human mind can apply them consciously, while in nature and also up to now for the most part in human history, these laws assert themselves unconsciously in the form of external necessity in the midst of an endless series of seeming accidents. Thereby the dialectic of the concept itself became merely the conscious reflex of the dialectical motion of the real world and the dialectic of Hegel was placed upon its head; or rather, turned off its head, on which it was standing before, and placed upon its feet again. And this materialist dialectic which for years has been our best working tool and our sharpest weapon was, remarkably enough, discovered not only by us, but also independently of us and even of Hegel by a German worker, Joseph Dietzgen.

In this way, however, the revolutionary side of Hegelian philosophy was again taken up and at the same time freed from the idealist trammels which in Hegel's hands had prevented its consistent execution. The great basic thought that the world is not to be comprehended as a complex of ready-made *things*, but as a complex of *processes*, in which the things apparently stable no less than their mind-images in our heads, the concepts, go through an uninterrupted change of coming into being and

passing away, in which, in spite of all seeming accidents and of all temporary retrogression, a progressive development asserts itself in the end—this great fundamental thought has, especially since the time of Hegel, so thoroughly permeated ordinary consciousness that in this generality it is scarcely ever contradicted. But to acknowledge this fundamental thought in words and to apply it in reality in detail to each domain of investigation are two different things. If, however, investigation always proceeds from this standpoint, the demand for final solutions and eternal truths ceases once for all; one is always conscious of the necessary limitations of all acquired knowledge, of the fact that it is conditioned by the circumstances in which it was acquired. On the other hand, one no longer permits oneself to be imposed upon by the antithesis, insuperable for the still common old metaphysics, between true and false, good and bad, identical and different, necessary and accidental. One knows that these antitheses have only a relative validity; that that which is recognised now as true has also its latent false side which will later manifest itself, just as that which is now regarded as false has also its true side by virtue of which it could previously have been regarded as true. One knows that what is maintained to be necessary is composed of sheer accidents and that the so-called accidental is the form behind which necessity hides itself—and so on.

The old method of investigation and thought which Hegel calls "metaphysical," which preferred

to investigate *things* as given, as fixed and stable, a method the relics of which still strongly haunt people's minds, had a good deal of historical justification in its day. It was necessary first to examine things before it was possible to examine processes. One had first to know what a particular thing was before one could observe the changes going on in connection with it. And such was the case with natural science. The old metaphysics which accepted things as finished objects arose from a natural science which investigated dead and living things as finished objects. But when this investigation had progressed so far that it became possible to take the decisive step forward of transition to the systematic investigation of the changes which these things undergo in nature itself, then the last hour of the old metaphysics sounded in the realm of philosophy also. And in fact, while natural science up to the end of the last century was predominantly a *collecting* science, a science of finished things, in our century it is essentially a *classifying* science, a science of the processes, of the origin and development of these things and of the inter-connection which binds all these natural processes into one great whole. Physiology, which investigates the processes occurring in plant and animal organisms; embryology, which deals with the development of individual organisms from germ to maturity; geology, which investigates the gradual formation of the earth's surface—all these are the offspring of our century.

But, above all, there are three great discoveries

which had enabled our knowledge of the inter-connection of natural processes to advance by leaps and bounds: first, the discovery of the cell as the unit from whose multiplication and differentiation the whole plant and animal body develops—so that not only is the development and growth of all higher organisms recognised to proceed according to a single general law, but also, in the capacity of the cell to change, the way is pointed out by which organisms can change their species and thus go through a more than individual development. Second, the transformation of energy, which has demonstrated that all the so-called forces operative in the first instance in inorganic nature—mechanical force and its complement, so-called potential energy, heat, radiation (light or radiant heat), electricity, magnetism and chemical energy—are different forms of manifestation of universal motion, which pass into one another in definite proportion so that in place of a certain quantity of the one which disappears, a certain quantity of another makes its appearance and thus the whole motion of nature is reduced to this incessant process of transformation from one form into another. Finally, the proof which Darwin first developed in connected form that the stock of organic products of nature surrounding us to-day, including mankind, is the result of a long process of evolution from a few original unicellular germs, and that these again have arisen from protoplasm or albumen which came into existence by chemical means.

Thanks to these three great discoveries and

the other immense advances in natural science, we have now arrived at the point where we can demonstrate as a whole the inter-connection between the processes in nature not only in particular spheres but also in the inter-connection of these particular spheres themselves, and so can present in an approximately systematic form a comprehensive view of the inter-connection in nature by means of the facts provided by empirical natural science itself. To furnish this comprehensive view was formerly the task of so-called natural philosophy. It could do this only by putting in place of the real but as yet unknown inter-connections ideal and imaginary ones, filling out the missing facts by figments of the mind and bridging the actual gaps merely in imagination. In the course of this procedure it conceived many brilliant ideas and foreshadowed many later discoveries, but it also produced a considerable amount of nonsense, which indeed could not have been otherwise. To-day, when one needs to comprehend the results of natural scientific investigation only dialectically, that is, in the sense of their own inter-connections, in order to arrive at a "system of nature" sufficiently for our time; when the dialectical character of this inter-connection is forcing itself against their will even into the metaphysically-trained minds of the natural scientists, to-day this natural philosophy is finally disposed of. Every attempt at resurrecting it would be not only superfluous but a *step backwards*.

But what is true of nature, which is hereby recognised also as an historical process of develop-

ment, is also true of the history of society in all its branches and of the totality of all sciences which occupy themselves with things human (and divine). Here, too, the philosophy of history, of law, of religion, etc., has consisted in the substitution of an inter-connection fabricated in the mind of the philosopher for the actual inter-connection to be demonstrated in the events; and in the comprehension of history as a whole as well as in its separate parts, as the gradual realisation of ideas—and, indeed, naturally always the pet ideas of the philosopher himself. According to this, history worked unconsciously but with necessity towards a certain pre-determined, ideal goal—as, for example, according to Hegel, towards the realisation of his absolute idea—and the unalterable trend towards this absolute idea formed the inner inter-connection in the events of history. A new mysterious providence—unconscious or gradually coming into consciousness—was thus put in the place of the real, still unknown inter-connection. Here, therefore, just as in the realm of nature, it was necessary to do away with these fabricated, artificial inter-connections by the discovery of the real ones; a task which ultimately amounts to the discovery of the general laws of motion which assert themselves as the ruling ones in the history of human society.

In one point, however, the history of the development of society proves to be essentially different from that of nature. In nature—in so far as we ignore man's reactions upon nature—there are only blind unconscious agencies acting upon one another

and out of whose interplay the general law comes into operation. Nothing of all that happens—whether in the innumerable apparent accidents observable upon the surface of things, or in the ultimate results which confirm the regularity underlying these accidents—is attained as a consciously desired aim. In the history of society, on the other hand, the actors are all endowed with consciousness, are men acting with deliberation or passion, working towards definite goals; nothing happens without a conscious purpose, without an intended aim. But this distinction important as it is for historical investigation, particularly of single epochs and events, cannot alter the fact that the course of history is governed by inner general laws. For here, also, on the whole, in spite of the consciously desired aims of all individuals, accident apparently reigns on the surface. That which is willed happens but rarely; in the majority of instances the numerous desired ends cross and conflict with one another, or these ends themselves are from the outset incapable of realisation or the means of attaining them are insufficient. Thus the conflict of innumerable individual wills and individual actions in the domain of history produces a state of affairs entirely analogous to that in the realm of unconscious nature. The ends of the actions are intended, but the results which actually follow from these actions are not intended; or when they do seem to correspond to the end intended, they ultimately have consequences quite other than those intended. Historical events thus appear on the whole to be

likewise governed by chance. But where on the surface accident holds sway, there actually it is always governed by inner, hidden laws and it is only a matter of discovering these laws.

Men make their own history, whatever its outcome may be, in that each person follows his own consciously desired end, and it is precisely the resultant of these many wills operating in different directions and of their manifold effects upon the outer world that constitutes history. Thus it is also a question of what the many individuals desire. The will is determined by passion or deliberation. But the levers which immediately determine passion or deliberation are of very different kinds. Partly they may be external objects, partly ideal motives, ambition, "enthusiasm for truth and justice," personal hatred or even purely individual whims of all kinds. But, on the one hand, we have seen that the many individual wills active in history for the most part produce results quite other than those they intended—often quite the opposite; their motives therefore in relation to the total result are likewise of only secondary significance. On the other hand, the further question arises: what driving forces in turn stand behind these motives? What are the historical causes which transform themselves into these motives in the brains of the actors?

The old materialism never put this question to itself. Its conception of history, in so far as it has one at all, is therefore essentially pragmatic; it judges everything according to the motives of



the action; it divides men in their historical activity into noble and ignoble and then finds that as a rule the noble are defrauded and the ignoble are victorious. Hence it follows for the old materialism that nothing very edifying is to be got from the study of history, and for us that in the realm of history the old materialism becomes untrue to itself because it takes the ideal driving forces which operate there as ultimate causes, instead of investigating what is behind them, what are the driving forces of these driving forces. The inconsistency does not lie in the fact that *ideal* driving forces are recognised, but in the investigation not being carried further back behind these into their motive causes. On the other hand, philosophy of history, particularly as represented by Hegel, recognises that the ostensible and also the really operating motives of men who figure in history are by no means the ultimate causes of historical events; that behind these motives are other moving forces, which have to be discovered. But it does not seek these forces in history itself, it imports them rather from outside, from out of philosophical ideology, into history. Hegel, for example, instead of explaining the history of ancient Greece out of its own inner inter-connections, simply maintains that it is nothing more than the working out of "types of beautiful individuality," the realisation of a "work of art" as such. He says much in this connection about the old Greeks that is fine and profound but that does not prevent us to-day from refusing to be put off with such an explanation,

which is a mere manner of speech.

When, therefore, it is a question of investigating the driving forces which—consciously or unconsciously, and indeed very often unconsciously—lie behind the motives of men in their historical actions and which constitute the real ultimate driving forces of history, then it is not a question so much of the motives of single individuals, however eminent, as of those motives which set in motion great masses, whole peoples, and again whole classes of the people in each people; and here, too, not the transient flaring up of a straw-fire which quickly dies down, but a lasting action resulting in a great historical transformation. To ascertain the driving causes which here in the minds of acting masses and their leaders—the so-called great men—are reflected as conscious motives, clearly or unclearly, directly or in ideological, even glorified form—that is the only path which can put us on the track of the laws holding sway both in history as a whole, and at particular periods and in particular lands. Everything which sets men in motion must go through their minds; but what form it will take in the mind will depend very much upon the circumstances. The workers have by no means become reconciled to capitalist machine-industry, even though they no longer simply break the machines to pieces as they still did in 1848 on the Rhine.

But while in all earlier periods the investigation of these driving causes of history was almost impossible—on account of the complicated and

concealed inter-connections between them and their effects—our present period has so far simplified these inter-connections that the riddle could be solved. Since the establishment of large-scale industry, *i.e.*, at least since the peace of Europe in 1815, it has been no longer a secret to any man in England that the whole political struggle there has turned on the claims to supremacy of two classes: the landed aristocracy and the middle class. In France, with the return of the Bourbons, the same fact was perceived; the historians of the Restoration period, from Thierry to Guizot, Mignet and Thiers, speak of it everywhere as the key to the understanding of all French history since the Middle Ages. And since 1830 the working class, the proletariat, has been recognised in both countries as a third competitor for power. Conditions had become so simplified that one would have had to close one's eyes deliberately not to see in the fight of these three great classes and in the conflict of their interests the driving force of modern history—at least in the two most advanced countries.

But how did these classes come into existence? If it was possible at first glance still to ascribe the origin of the great, formerly feudal landed property—at least in the first instance—to political causes, to taking possession by force, this could no longer be done in regard to the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Here the origin and development of two great classes was seen to lie clearly and palpably in purely economic causes.\* And it was just as clear that in the struggle between landed property and

the bourgeoisie, no less than in the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, it was a question in the first instance of economic interests, to the furtherance of which political power was intended to serve merely as a means. Bourgeoisie and proletariat both arose in consequence of a transformation of the economic conditions, more precisely, of the mode of production. The transition, first from guild handicrafts to manufacture, and then from manufacture to large-scale industry, with steam and mechanical power, had caused the development of these two classes. At a particular stage the new forces of production set in motion by the bourgeoisie—in the first place the division of labour and the combination of many workers, each producing a particular part, in one complete manufacture—and the conditions and requirements of exchange developed through these productive forces became incompatible with the existing order of production historically established and sanctified by law, that is to say, incompatible with the privileges of the guild and the numerous other local and personal privileges (which were only so many fetters to the unprivileged) of the feudal social organisation. The forces of production represented by the bourgeoisie rebelled against the order of production represented by the feudal landlords and the guildmasters. The result is known: the feudal fetters were smashed, gradually in England, at one blow in France. In Germany the process is not yet finished. But just as, at a definite stage of its development, manufacture came into conflict

with the feudal order of production, so now big industry has already come into conflict with the bourgeois order of production established in its place. Tied down by this order, by the narrow limits of the capitalist mode of production, big industry produces on the one hand an ever-increasing proletarianisation of the great mass of the people, and on the other hand, an ever greater mass of unsaleable products. Over-production and mass misery, each the cause of the other—that is the absurd contradiction which is its outcome, and which of necessity calls for the liberation of the productive forces by means of a change in the mode of production.

In modern history at least it is therefore proved that all political struggles are class struggles, and all class struggles for emancipation in the last resort, despite their necessarily political form—for every class struggle is a political struggle—turn ultimately on the question of economic emancipation. Therefore, here at least the state—the political order—is the subordinate, and civil society—the realm of economic relations—the decisive element. The traditional conception, to which Hegel, too, pays homage, saw in the state the determining element, and in civil society the element determined by it. Appearances correspond to this. As all the driving forces of the actions of any individual person must pass through his brain, and transform themselves into motives of his will in order to set him into action, so also all the needs of civil society—no matter which class happens to be the ruling one—

must pass through the will of the state in order to secure general validity in the form of laws. That is the formal aspect of the matter—the one which is self-evident. The question arises, however, what is the content of this merely formal *will*—of the individual as well as of the state—and whence is this content derived? Why is just this intended and not something else? If we enquire into this we discover that in modern history the will of the state is, on the whole, determined by the changing needs of civil society, by the supremacy of this or that class, in the last resort, by the development of the productive forces and relations of exchange.

But if already in our modern era, with its gigantic means of production and communication, the state is not an independent domain with an independent development, but one whose stock as well as development is to be explained in the last resort by the economic conditions of life of the society, then this must be still more true of earlier times when the production of the material life of man was not carried on with these abundant auxiliary means, and when, therefore, the necessity of such production must necessarily have exercised a still greater mastery over men. If the state to-day, in the era of big industry and of railways, is on the whole only a reflex, in comprehensive form, of the economic needs of the class controlling production, then this must have been much more so in an epoch when each generation of men was forced to spend a far greater part of its

aggregate life-time in satisfying material needs, and was therefore much more dependent on them than we are to-day. An examination of the history of earlier periods, as soon as it is seriously undertaken from this angle, most abundantly confirms this. But, of course, this cannot be gone into here.

If the state and public law are determined by economic relations, so, too, of course is private law which indeed in essence sanctions only the existing economic relations between individuals which are normal in the given circumstances. The form in which this happens can, however, vary considerably. It is possible, as happened in England, in harmony with the whole national development, to retain in the main the forms of the old feudal laws while giving them a bourgeois content: in fact, directly giving a bourgeois meaning to the old feudal name. But, also, as happened in western continental Europe, Roman Law, the first world law of a commodity-producing society, with its unsurpassably acute elaboration of all the essential legal relations of simple commodity owners (of buyers and sellers, debtors and creditors, contracts, obligations, etc.) can be taken as a foundation. In this case, for the benefit of a still petty-bourgeois and semi-feudal society, it can be adapted to the situation of such a society either simply through every-day legal practice (the common law) or, with the help of allegedly enlightened, moralising jurists a special law code can be worked out from it to correspond with such social condi-

tions—a code which in these circumstances will also be a bad one from a legal standpoint (*e.g.*, the Prussian *Landrecht*). Whereby again, after the great bourgeois revolution, such a classic law code of bourgeois society as the French *Code Civil* can be worked out upon the basis of this same Roman Law. If, therefore, bourgeois legal regulations merely express the economic life-conditions of society in legal form, then this can take place well or ill according to circumstances.

The state presents itself to us as the first ideological power over mankind. Society creates for itself an organ for the safeguarding of its general interests against internal and external attacks. This organ is the state power. Hardly come into being, this organ makes itself independent in regard to society; and, indeed, the more so, the more it becomes the organ of a particular class, the more it directly enforces the supremacy of that class. The fight of the oppressed class against the ruling class becomes necessarily a political fight, a fight first of all against the political dominance of this class. The consciousness of the inter-connection between this political struggle and its economic roots becomes dulled and can be lost altogether. While this is not altogether the case with the participants, it almost always happens with the historians. Of the ancient sources on the struggles within the Roman Republic only Appian<sup>1</sup> tells

<sup>1</sup> Roman historian of the second century who wrote mainly about the civil wars of ancient Rome.—*Ed.*



us clearly and distinctly what was at issue in the last resort—namely, landed property.

But once the state has become an independent power in regard to society, it produces forthwith a further ideology. It is indeed only among professional politicians, theorists of constitutional law and jurists of private law, that the connection with economic facts gets completely lost. Since in each particular case the economic facts must assume the form of juristic motives in order to receive legal sanction; and since, in so doing, consideration of course has to be paid to the whole legal system already in operation, the consequence is that the juristic form is made everything and the economic content nothing. Public law and private law are treated as independent spheres, each having its own independent historical development, each being capable of and needing a systematic presentation by the thorough-going elimination of all inner contradictions.

Still higher ideologies, that is, such as are still further removed from the material, economic basis, take the form of philosophy and religion. Here the inter-connection between the ideas and their material conditions of existence becomes more and more complicated, more and more obscured by intermediate links. But the inter-connection exists. Just as the whole Renaissance period from the middle of the fifteenth century was an essential product of the towns and therefore of the bourgeoisie so also was the subsequently newly awakened philosophy. Its content was in essence only the

philosophical expression of the thoughts corresponding to the development of the small and middle bourgeoisie into a big bourgeoisie. Among last century's Englishmen and Frenchmen who in many cases were just as much political economists as philosophers, this is clearly evident; and we have proved it above in regard to the Hegelian school.

We will now in addition deal only briefly with religion, since the latter appears to stand furthest away from, and to be the most foreign to, material life. Religion arose in very primitive times from erroneous and primitive ideas of men about their own nature and that of the external world surrounding them. Every ideology, however, once it has arisen, develops in connection with the given concept-material, and develops this material further; otherwise it would cease to be ideology, that is, occupation with thoughts as with independent entities, developing independently and subject only to their own laws. That the material life conditions of the persons inside whose heads this thought process goes on, in the last resort determine the course of this process, remains of necessity unknown to these persons, for otherwise there would be an end to all ideology. These primitive religious notions, therefore, which in the main are common to each group of kindred peoples, develop, after the separation of the group, in a manner peculiar to each people, according to the living conditions falling to their lot. For a number of groups of peoples, and particularly for the Aryans (so-called Indo-Europeans) this

process has been shown in detail by comparative mythology. The gods so created by each people were national gods, whose domain extended no farther than the national territory which they were to defend; on the other side of its boundaries other gods held undisputed sway. The idea of them could only continue to exist as long as the nation existed; they fell with its fall. The Roman world empire, the economic conditions of whose origin we do not need to examine here, brought about this downfall of the old nationalities. The old national gods decayed, even those of Romans, which themselves also were fashioned only to suit the narrow confines of the city of Rome. The need to complement the world empire by means of a world religion was clearly revealed in the attempts made to provide in Rome recognition and altars for all the foreign gods to the slightest degree respectable alongside of the indigenous ones. But a new world religion is not to be made in this fashion, by imperial degree. The new world religion, Christianity, had already quietly come into being, out of a mixture of generalised Oriental, particularly Jewish, theology and vulgarised Greek, particularly Stoic, philosophy. What it originally looked like has to be first laboriously discovered again, since its official form, as it has been handed down to us, is merely that in which it became a state religion, to which purpose it was adapted by the Council of Nicæa. The fact that already after 250 years it became a state religion suffices to show that it was a religion that corresponded

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to the conditions of the time. In the Middle Ages, in the same measure as feudalism developed, it grew into the religious counterpart to it, with a corresponding feudal hierarchy. And as the bourgeoisie arose, there developed within it, in opposition to feudal Catholicism, the Protestant heresy, which first appeared in Southern France, among the Albigenses<sup>1</sup> at the time of the highest flourishing of the cities there. The Middle Ages had attached to theology all the other forms of ideology—philosophy, politics, jurisprudence—and made them sub-divisions of theology. It thereby constrained every social and political movement to take on a theological form. To the masses whose minds were fed with religion to the exclusion of all else, it was necessary to put forward their own interests in a religious guise in order to produce a great agitation. And since the bourgeoisie from the beginning brought into being an appendage of propertyless urban plebeians, day-labourers and servants of all kinds, belonging to no

<sup>1</sup> The Albigenses, Cathari, participated in a movement which covered Southern France during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. (The name is derived from the town of Albi, in the south of France.) The movement was directed against the exploiting Roman Catholic church headed by the Pope. The urban trading bourgeoisie, the artisans, the city poor and the peasants all took part in the movement. In the beginning of the twelfth century a special crusade was organised by the Pope against the Albigenses resulting in protracted warfare (lasting over 20 years) and ending with the defeat of the Albigenses.—*Ed.*

recognised social estate, precursors of the later proletariat, so likewise heresy soon became divided into a bourgeois moderate heresy and a plebeian revolutionary one, the latter an abomination to the bourgeois heretics themselves.

The ineradicability of the Protestant heresy corresponded to the invincibility of the rising bourgeoisie. When the bourgeoisie had become sufficiently strengthened, its struggle against the feudal nobility, which till then had been predominantly local, began to assume national dimensions. The first great action occurred in Germany—the so-called Reformation. The bourgeoisie was neither powerful enough nor sufficiently developed to be able to unite under its banner the rest of the rebellious estates—the plebeians of the towns, the lower nobility and the peasants on the land. At first the nobles were defeated; the peasants rose in a revolt which forms the peak of the whole revolutionary struggle; the cities left them in the lurch, and thus the revolution succumbed to the armies of the secular princes who reaped the whole profit.<sup>1</sup> Thenceforward Germany disappears for three centuries from the ranks of countries playing an independent part in history. But besides the German, Luther, appeared the Frenchman, Calvin. With true French acumen he put the bourgeois character of the reformation in the forefront, republicanised and democratised the church. While the Lutheran reformation in Germany degenerated and reduced

<sup>1</sup> See Engels' *The Peasant War in Germany*.—Ed.

the country to wrack and ruin, the Calvinist reformation served as a banner for the republicans in Geneva, in Holland and in Scotland, freed Holland from Spain and from the German Empire and provided the ideological costume for the second act of the bourgeois revolution which took place in England. Here Calvinism justified itself as the true religious disguise of the interests of the bourgeoisie of that time, and on this account did not reach full acceptance, as the revolution was completed in 1689 by a compromise between one part of the nobility and the bourgeoisie. The English state church was re-established; but not in its earlier form of a Catholicism which had the king for its pope, being, instead, strongly Calvinised. The old state church had celebrated the merry Catholic Sabbath and had fought against the dull Calvinist one. The new bourgeois church introduced the latter, which adorns England to this day.

In France, the Calvinist minority was suppressed in 1685 and either Catholicised or driven out of the country. But what was the good? Already at that time the free-thinker Pierre Bayle was at work, and in 1694 Voltaire was born. The forcible measures of Louis XIV only made it easier for the French bourgeoisie to carry through its revolution in the irreligious and exclusively political form which alone was suited to the developed bourgeoisie. Instead of Protestants, free-thinkers took their seats in the national assemblies. Thereby Christianity entered into its final stage. It had become incapable for the future of serving any progressive

class as the ideological garb of its aspirations. It became more and more the exclusive possession of the ruling classes and these apply it as a mere means of government, to keep the lower classes within limits. For this each of the different classes uses its own appropriate religion: the landowning class—Catholic Jesuitism or Protestant orthodoxy; the liberal and radical bourgeoisie—rationalism; and it makes little difference whether these gentlemen themselves believe in their respective religions or not.

We see, therefore: religion, once formed, always contains traditional material, just as in all ideological domains tradition forms a great conservative force. But the transformations which this material undergoes spring from class relations, that is to say, out of the economic relations of the persons who execute these transformations. And here that is sufficient.

In the above it could only be a question of giving a general sketch of the Marxist conception of history, at most with a few illustrations as well. The proof is to be found in history itself; and in this regard I may be permitted to say that it has been sufficiently furnished in other writings. This conception, however, puts an end to philosophy in the realm of history, just as the dialectical conception of nature made all natural philosophy both unnecessary and impossible. It is no longer a question anywhere of inventing inter-connections from out of our brains, but of discovering them in the facts. For philosophy, which has been ex-

pelled from nature and history, there remains only the realm of pure thought (so far as it is left): the theory of the laws of the thought-process itself, logic and dialectics.

With the Revolution of 1848, "educated" Germany, said farewell to theory and went over to the field of practice. Small production, based upon handicraft, and manufacture, were superseded by really large-scale industry. Germany again appeared on the world market. The new little German Empire<sup>1</sup> abolished at least the more crying of the anomalies which had been placed in the way of its development by the system of petty states, the relics of feudalism and bureaucratic economy. But to the same degree that speculation abandoned the philosopher's study in order to set up its temple in the Stock Exchange, educated Germany lost the great aptitude for theory which had been the glory of Germany in the days of its deepest political humiliation—the aptitude for purely scientific investigation, irrespective of whether the result obtained was practically applicable or not, whether likely to meet with the approval or disapproval of the police authorities. Official German natural science, it is true, maintained its position in the front rank, particularly in the field of specialised research. But already the American journal *Science* remarks with truth that the decisive advances in the sphere of the comprehensive correlation of particular facts and their generalisation into laws,

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.*, not embracing all German-speaking lands.—Ed.



are now being made much more in England, instead of, as formerly, in Germany. And in the sphere of the historical sciences, philosophy included, the old fearless zeal for theory has now disappeared completely along with classical philosophy. Empty eclecticism and an anxious concern for career and income, descending to the most vulgar place-hunting, occupies its place. The official representatives of these sciences have become the undisguised ideologists of the bourgeoisie and the existing state—but at a time when both stand in open antagonism to the working class.

Only among the working class does the German aptitude for theory remain unimpaired. Here it cannot be exterminated. Here there is no concern for careers, for profit-making, or for gracious patronage from above. On the contrary, the more ruthlessly and disinterestedly science proceeds the more it finds itself in harmony with the interests and efforts of the workers. The new tendency, which recognised that the key to the understanding of the whole history of society lies in the historical development of labour, from the outset, addressed itself by preference to the working class and here found the response which it neither sought nor expected from officially recognised science. The German working class is the inheritor of German classical philosophy.

## SECTION II

# EXTRACTS FROM 'ANTI DUHRING' ON PHILOSOPHY

By ENGELS

*Eugen Duhring, a German professor published in 1874 a book which claimed to present a complete system of philosophy. Duhring wanted to be recognised as a Socialist, and his ideas began to cause some confusion among the German workers. In fact Duhring was neither a Socialist nor a Materialist and in order to counteract the influence of his ideas, Engels was requested by the German Social Democratic Party to write an answer to Duhring's book. Engels undertook this work and while critically examining Duhring's views, formulated his own positive views and those of Marx on a variety of subjects. The book when published was entitled "Anti Duhring." It is by far the most comprehensive of Engels works dealing with the theory of dialectical materialism and its application to different branches of human knowledge. The extracts printed in the following pages constitute authoritative statements of Marxist theory on various philosophical questions.*

## CLASSIFICATION: A PRIORISM

.....Logical schemata can only relate to *forms of thought* but, what we are dealing with here are only forms of *being*, of the external world, and these forms can never be created and derived by thought out of itself, but only from the external world. But with this the whole relationship is inverted: the principles are not the starting point of the investigation, but its final result; they are not applied to Nature and human history but, abstracted from them; it is not Nature and the realm of humanity which conform to these principles, but the principles are only valid in so far as they are in conformity with Nature and history. That is the only materialistic conception of the matter, and Herr Duhring's contrary conception is idealistic, makes things stand completely on their heads, and fashions the real world out of ideas, out of schemata, schemes or categories existing somewhere before the world, from eternity—just like a *Hegel*.

Such a result comes of accepting in quite a naturalistic way "consciousness," "reasoning," as something given, something from the outset in contrast to being, to Nature. If this were so, it must seem extremely remarkable that consciousness and Nature, thinking and being, the laws of thought and the laws of Nature, should be so closely in

correspondence. But if the further question is raised: what then are thought and consciousness, and whence they come, it becomes apparent that they are products of the human brain and that man himself is a product of Nature, which has been developed in and along with its environment; whence it is self-evident that the products of the human brain, being in the last analysis also products of Nature, do not contradict the rest of Nature but are in correspondence with it.....

If we deduce the world schematism not from our minds, but only through our minds from the real world, deducing the basic principles of being from what is, we need no philosophy for this purpose, but positive knowledge of the world and of what happens in it; and what this yields is also not philosophy, but positive science.

Further: If no philosophy as such is any longer required, then also there is no more need of any system, not even of any natural system of philosophy. The perception that all the phenomena of Nature are systematically interconnected drives science on to prove this systematic inter-connection throughout, both in general and in detail. But an adequate, exhaustive scientific statement of this inter-connection, the formation or thought of an exact picture of the world system in which we live, is impossible for us, and will always remain impossible. If at any time in the evolution of mankind such a final, conclusive system of the inter-connections within the world—physical as well as mental and historical—were brought to completion,

this would mean that human knowledge had reached its limit, and, from the moment when society had been brought into accord with that system, further historical evolution would be cut short—which would be an absurd idea, pure nonsense. Mankind therefore finds itself faced with a contradiction: on the one hand, it has to gain an exhaustive knowledge of the world system in all its inter-relations; and on the other hand, because of the nature both of man and of the world system, this task can never be completely fulfilled. But this contradiction lies not only in the nature of the two factors—the world, and man—it is also the main lever of all intellectual advance, and finds its solution continuously, day by day, in the endless progressive evolution of humanity, just as for example mathematical problems find their solution in an infinite series of continued fractions. Each mental image of the world system is and remains in actual fact limited, objectively through the historical stage and subjectively through the physical and mental constitution of its maker.....

As with the basic forms of being, so also Herr Duhring thinks that he can produce ready-made the whole of pure mathematics *a priori*, that is, without making use of the experiences offered us by the external world. In pure mathematics, in his view, the mind deals “with its own free creations and imaginations”; the concepts of number and form are “its adequate object, which it can create of itself,” and they even have “a validity which is independent of *particular* experience and of the real

content of the world."

That pure mathematics has a validity which is independent of the *particular* experience of each individual is, for that matter, correct, and this is true of all established facts in every science, and indeed of all facts whatsoever. The magnetic poles, the fact that water is composed of hydrogen and oxygen, the fact that Hegel is dead and that Herr Duhring is alive, hold good independently of my own experience or of that of any other individual's, and even independently of Herr Duhring's experience, when he begins to sleep the sleep of the just. But it is not at all true that in pure mathematics the mind deals only with its own creations and imaginations. The concepts of number and form have not been derived from any source other than the world of reality. The ten fingers on which men learnt to count, that is, to carry out the first arithmetical operation, may be anything else, but they are certainly not a free creation of the mind. Counting requires not only objects that can be counted, but also the ability to exclude all properties of the objects considered other than their number—and this ability is the product of a long historical evolution based on experience. Like the idea of number, so the idea of form is derived exclusively from the external world, and does not arise in the mind as a product of pure thought. There must be things which have shape and whose shapes are compared before anyone can arrive at the idea of form. Pure mathematics deals with the space forms and quantity relations of the real world—that is, with material

which is very real indeed. The fact that this material appears in an extremely abstract form can only superficially conceal its origin in the external world. But in order to make it possible to investigate these forms and relations in their pure state, it is necessary to abstract them entirely from their content, to put the content aside as irrelevant; hence we get the point without dimensions, lines without breadth and thickness,  $a$  and  $b$  and  $x$  and  $y$  constants, and variables; and only at the very end of all these do we reach for the first time the free creations and imaginations of the mind, that is to say, imaginary magnitudes. Even the apparent derivation of mathematical magnitudes from each other does not prove their *a priori* origin, but only their rational inter-connection. Before it was possible to arrive at the idea of deducing the *form* of a cylinder from the rotation of a rectangle about one of its sides, a number of real rectangles and cylinders, in however imperfect a form, must have been examined. Like all other sciences, mathematics arose out of the *needs* of men; from the measurement of land and of the content of vessels, from the computation of time and mechanics. But, as in every department of thought, at a certain stage of development the laws abstracted from the real world become divorced from the real world, and are set over against it as something independent, as laws coming from outside, to which the world has to conform. This took place in society and in the stage, and in this way, and not otherwise, *pure* mathematics is subsequently *applied* to the world, although it is

borrowed from this same world and only represents one section of its forms of inter-connection—and it is only just precisely because of this that it can be applied at all.



## NATURAL PHILOSOPHY: COSMOGONY, PHYSICS, CHEMISTRY .

.....The materialists before Herr Duhring spoke of matter and motion. He reduces motion to mechanical force as its supposed basic form, and thereby makes it impossible for himself to understand the real connection between matter and motion, which in fact was also unclear to all former materialists. And yet it is simple enough. *Motion is the mode of existence of matter.* Never anywhere has there been matter without motion, nor can there be. Motion in cosmic space, mechanical motion of smaller masses on the various celestial bodies, the motion of molecules as heat or as electrical or magnetic currents, chemical combination or disintegration, organic life—at each given moment each individual atom of matter in the world is in one or other of these forms of motion, or in several ~~forms~~ of them at once. All rest, all equilibrium, is only ~~relative~~, and only has meaning in relation to one or other definite form of motion. A body, for example, may be on the ground in mechanical equilibrium, may be mechanically at rest; but this in no way prevents it from participating in the motion of the earth and in that of the whole solar •system, just as little as it prevents its most minute physical parts from carrying out the oscillations

determined by its temperature, or its atoms from passing through a chemical process. Matter without motion is just as unthinkable as motion without matter. Motion is therefore as uncreatable and indestructible as matter itself; as the older philosophy (Descartes) expressed it, the quantity of motion existing in the world is always the same. Motion therefore cannot be created; it can only be transferred. When motion is transferred from one body to another, in so far as it transfers itself, is active, it may be regarded as the cause of motion, in so far as the latter is transferred, is passive. We call this active motion *force*, and the passive, the *manifestation of force*. In this it is as clear as daylight that the force is equal to its manifestation, because in fact it is the *same* motion which takes place in both.

A motionless state of matter is therefore one of the most empty and nonsensical of ideas—a “delirious phantasy” of the purest water. In order to arrive at such an idea it is necessary to conceive the relative mechanical equilibrium, in which state a body on the earth may in fact be at absolute rest, and then to extend this over the whole universe. This is certainly made easier if universal motion is reduced to purely mechanical force. And the restriction of motion to purely mechanical force has the further advantage that a force can be conceived as at rest, as tied up, and as therefore for the moment inactive. When in fact, as is very often the case, the transfer of a motion is a somewhat complex process containing a number of intermedi-

ate points, it is possible to postpone the actual transmission to any moment desired by omitting the last link in the chain. This is the case for instance if a man loads a gun and postpones the moment when, through the pulling of the trigger, the discharge, the transfer of the motion set free by the explosion of the powder, takes place. It is therefore possible to imagine that during its motionless, identical state, matter was loaded with force, and this, if anything at all, seems to be what Herr Duhring understands by the unity of matter and mechanical force. This concept is nonsensical, because it transfers to the universe, as if it were absolute, a state which by its nature is relative and therefore can only apply to *one part* of matter at one time. Even if we overlook this point, the difficulty still remains: first, how did the world come to be loaded, since nowadays guns do not load themselves; and second, whose finger was it that pulled the trigger? We may turn and twist as much as we like, but under Herr Duhring's guidance we always come back again to the finger of God.....

• In ordinary mechanics the bridge from the static to the dynamic is the external stimulus. If a stone weighing a hundredweight is raised from the ground ten yards into the air and is freely suspended in such a way that it remains hanging there in an identical state and in a relation of rest, it would be necessary to have an audience of sucklings to be able to maintain that the present state of this body does not represent any mechanical work, or that its

distance from its previous position is not measured by mechanical work. Every passer-by will easily explain to Herr Duhring that the stone did not rise of itself to the rope, and any textbook of mechanics will tell him that if he lets the stone fall again it exerts in falling just as much mechanical work as was necessary to raise it the ten yards in the air. Even the simple fact that the stone is hanging up there represents mechanical work, for if it remains hanging long enough the rope breaks, as soon as chemical decomposition makes it no longer strong enough to bear the weight of the stone. But it is to such simple basic forms, to use Herr Duhring's language, that all mechanical processes can be reduced, and the engineer is still to be born who cannot find the bridge from the static to the dynamic, so long as he has at his disposal a sufficient external impulse.

To be sure, it is a hard nut and a bitter pill for our metaphysician that motion should find its measure in its opposite, in rest. That is indeed a crying contradiction, and every contradiction, according to Herr Duhring, is nonsensical. It is none the less a fact that the suspended stone, just like the loaded gun, represents a definite quantity of mechanical motion, that this definite quantity is measurable exactly by its weight and its distance from the ground, and that the mechanical motion may be used in various ways at will, for example, by its direct fall, by sliding down an inclined plane, or by turning a shaft. From the dialectical standpoint, the possibility of expressing motion in its opposite, in rest, presents absolutely no difficulty.

To dialectical philosophy the whole contradiction, as we have seen, is only relative; there is no such thing as absolute rest, unconditional equilibrium. Each separate movement strives towards equilibrium, and the motion as a whole puts an end to the equilibrium. When therefore rest and equilibrium occur they are the result of arrested motion, and it is self-evident that this motion is measurable in its result, can be expressed in it, and can be restored out of it again in one form or another. But Herr Duhring cannot allow himself to be satisfied with such a simple presentation of the matter. As a good metaphysician he first tears open a yawning gulf, which does not exist in reality, between motion and equilibrium, and is then surprised that he cannot find any bridge across this self-fabricated gulf. He might just as well mount his metaphysical Rosinante and chase the Kantian "thing-in-itself": for it is that and nothing else which in the last analysis is hiding behind this undiscoverable bridge.....

## MORALITY AND LAW: ETERNAL TRUTHS

.....Is human thought sovereign? Before we can answer yes or no we must first enquire: what is human thought? Is it the thought of the individual man? No. But it exists only as the individual thought of many billions of past, present and future men. If then, I say that the total thought of all these human beings, including future ones, which is embraced in my idea, is *sovereign*, able to know the world as it exists, if only mankind lasts long enough and in so far as no limits are imposed on its knowledge by its perceptive organs or the objects to be known, then I am saying something which is pretty banal and, in addition, pretty barren. For the most valuable result from it would be that it should make us extremely distrustful of our present knowledge, inasmuch as in all probability we are but little beyond the beginning of human history, and the generations which will put *us* right are likely to be far more numerous than those whose knowledge we—often enough with a considerable degree of contempt—are in a position to correct.

Herr Duhring himself declares that consciousness, and therefore also thought and knowledge, of necessity can only become manifest in a series of

individual beings. We can only ascribe sovereignty to the thought of each of these individuals in so far as we are not aware of any power which would be able to impose any idea forcibly on him, when he is of sound mind and wide awake. But as for the sovereign validity of the knowledge in each individual's mind, we all know that there can be no talk of such a thing, and that all previous experience shows that without exception such knowledge always contains much more that is capable of being improved upon than that which cannot be improved upon or is correct.

In other words, the sovereignty of thought is realised in a series of extremely unsovereignly-thinking human beings; the knowledge which has an unconditional claim to truth is realised in a series of relative errors; neither the one nor the other can be fully realised except through an endless eternity of human existence.

Here once again we find the same contradiction as we found above, between the character of human thought, necessarily conceived as absolute, and its reality in individual human beings with their extremely limited thought. This is a contradiction which can only be solved in the infinite progression, or what is for us, at least from a practical standpoint, the endless succession, of generations of mankind. In this sense human thought is just as much sovereign as not sovereign, and its capacity for knowledge just as much unlimited as limited. It is sovereign and unlimited in its disposition, its vocation, its possibilities and its historical pur-

pose; it is not sovereign and it is limited to its individual expression and in its realisation at each particular moment.

It is just the same with eternal truths. If mankind ever reached the stage at which it could only work with eternal truths, with conclusions which possess sovereign validity and have an unconditional claim to truth, it would then have reached the point where the infinity of the intellectual world both in its actuality and in its potentiality had been exhausted, and this would mean that the famous miracle of the infinite series which has been counted would have been performed.

But in spite of all this, are there any truths which are so securely based that any doubt of them seems to us to amount to insanity? That twice two makes four, that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, that Paris is in France, that a man who gets no food dies of hunger, and so forth? Are there then nevertheless *eternal* truths, final and ultimate truths?

Certainly there are. We can divide the whole realm of knowledge in the traditional way into three great departments. The first includes all sciences which are concerned with inanimate Nature and are to a greater or less degree susceptible of mathematical treatment: mathematics, astronomy, mechanics, physics, chemistry. If it gives anyone any pleasure to use mighty words for very simple things, it can be asserted that *certain* results obtained by these sciences are eternal truths, final and ultimate truths; for which reason these sciences are also



known as the *exact* sciences. But very far from all their results have this validity. With the introduction of variable magnitudes and the extension of their variability to the infinitely small and infinitely large, mathematics, in other respects so strictly moral, fell from grace; it ate of the tree of knowledge which opened up to it a career of most colossal achievement, but at the same time a path of error. The virgin state of absolute validity and irrefutable certainty of everything mathematical was gone for ever; mathematics entered the realm of controversy, and we have reached the point where most people differentiate and integrate not because they understand what they are doing but from pure faith, because up to now it has always come out right. Things are even worse with astronomy and mechanics and in physics and chemistry we are surrounded by hypotheses as by a swarm of bees. And it must of necessity be so. In physics we are dealing with the motion of molecules, in chemistry with the formation of molecules out of atoms, and if the interference of light waves is not a myth, we have absolutely no prospect of ever seeing these interesting objects with our own eyes. As time goes on, final and ultimate truths become remarkably rare in this field.

We are even worse off for them in geology, which by its nature has to deal chiefly with events which took place not only in our absence but in the absence of any human being whatever. The winning of final and absolute truths on this field is therefore a very troublesome business, and the crop

is extremely small.

The second department of science is the one which covers the investigation of living organisms. In this fluid there is much a multitude of inter-relationships and causalities that not only does the solution of each question give rise to a host of other questions, but each separate problem can only be solved piecemeal, through a series of investigations which often requires centuries to complete; and even then the need for a systematic presentation of all their inter-relations makes it necessary once more to surround the final and ultimate truths with a luxuriant growth of hypotheses. What a long series of intermediaries from Galen to Malpighi was necessary for correctly establishing such a simple matter as the circulation of the blood in mammals, how slight is our knowledge of the origin of blood corpuscles, and how numerous are the missing links even to-day, for example, in our attempts to bring the symptoms of a disease into some rational relationship with its causes! And often enough discoveries, such as that of the cell, are made which compel us to revise completely all formerly established final and ultimate truths in the realm of biology, and to put whole piles of them on the scrap heap once and for all. Anyone who wants to establish really pure and immutable truths in this science will therefore have to be content with such platitudes as: all men are mortal, all female mammals have lacteal glands, and the like; he will not even be able to assert that the higher mammals digest with their stomach and intestines and not with their

heads, for the nervous activity which is centralised in the head is indispensable to digestion.

But eternal truths are in an even worse plight in the third, the historical group of sciences. The subjects investigated by these in their historical sequence and in their present forms are the conditions of human life, social relationships, forms of law and government, with their ideal superstructure of philosophy, religion, art, etc. In organic nature we are at least dealing with a succession of phenomena which, so far as our immediate observation is concerned, are recurring with fair regularity between very wide limits. Organic species have on the whole remained unchanged since the time of Aristotle. In social history, however, the repetition of conditions is the exception and not the rule, once we pass beyond the primitive stage of man, the so-called Stone Age; and when such repetitions occur, they never arise under exactly similar conditions—as for example the existence of an original common ownership of the land among all civilised peoples, and the way in which this came to an end. In the sphere of human history our knowledge is therefore even more backward than in the realm of biology. Furthermore, when by way of exception the inner connection between the social and political forms in an epoch come to be recognised, this as a rule only occurs when these forms are already out of date and are nearing extinction. Therefore, knowledge is here essentially relative, inasmuch as it is limited to the perception of relationships and consequences of certain

social and state forms which exist only at a particular epoch and among particular people and are of their very nature transitory. Anyone therefore who sets out on this field to hunt down final and ultimate truths, truths which are pure or absolutely immutable, will bring home but little, apart from platitudes and common-places of the sorriest kind—for example, that generally speaking man cannot live except by labour: that up to the present mankind for the most part has been divided into rulers and ruled; that Napoleon died on May 5, 1821, and others of like kind.

Now it is a remarkable thing that it is precisely in this sphere that we most frequently encounter truths which claim to be eternal, final and ultimate and all the rest of it. That twice two make four, that birds have beaks, and similar statements, are proclaimed as eternal truths only by those who aim at deducing, from the existence of eternal truths in general, the conclusion that there are also eternal truths in the sphere of human history—eternal morality, eternal justice, and so on—which claim a validity and scope equal to those of the truths and deductions of mathematics. And then we can confidently rely on this same friend of humanity taking the first opportunity to assure us that all previous fabricators of eternal truths have been to a greater or lesser degree asses and charlatans, that they have all fallen into error and made mistakes; but that *their* error and *their* fallibility has been in accordance with natural law, and prove the existence of truth and accuracy in *his* case; and that he, the prophet

who has now arisen, has in his bag, all ready made, final and ultimate truth, eternal morality and eternal justice. This has all happened so many hundreds and thousands of times that we can only feel astonished that there should still be people credulous enough to believe this, not of others, but of themselves.....

We might have made mention above of the sciences which investigate the laws of human thought, i.e., logic and dialectics. In these, however, we do not fare any better as regards eternal truths. Herr Duhring declares that dialectics proper is pure nonsense, and the many books which have been and in the future will be written on logic provide on the other hand abundant proof that in this science too final and ultimate truths are much more sparsely sown than is commonly believed.

For that matter, there is absolutely no need to be alarmed at the fact that the stage of knowledge which we have now reached is as little final as all that have preceded it. It already embraces a vast mass of facts and requires very great specialisation of study on the part of anyone who wants to become an expert in any particular science. But a man who applies the measure of pure, immutable, final and ultimate truth to knowledge which, by the very nature of its object, must either remain relative for long successions of generations and be completed only step by step, or which, as in cosmogony, geology and the history of man, must always remain defective and incomplete because of the faultiness of historical material—such a man only

proves thereby his own ignorance and perversity, even if the real background to his pretensions is not, as it is in this case, his claim to personal infallibility. Truth and error like all concepts which are expressed in polar opposites, have absolute validity only in an extremely limited field, as we have just seen, and as even Herr Duhring would realise if he had any acquaintance with the first elements of dialectics, which deal precisely with the inadequacy of all polar opposites. As soon as we apply the antithesis between truth and error outside of that narrow field which has been referred to above it becomes relative and therefore unserviceable for exact scientific modes of expression; and if we attempt to apply it as absolutely valid outside that field we then really find ourselves beaten; both poles of the antithesis change into their opposites, truth becomes error and error truth. Let us take as an example the well-known Boyle's law by which, if the temperature remains constant, the volume of gases varies inversely with the pressure to which they are subjected. Regnault found that this law does not hold good in certain cases. Had he been a philosopher of reality he would have had to say: Boyle's law is mutable, and is therefore not a pure truth, therefore it is not a truth at all, therefore it is an error. But had he done this he would have committed an error far greater than the one that was contained in Boyle's law; his grain of truth would have been lost sight of in a sandhill of error; he would have distorted his originally correct conclusion into an error compared with

which Boyle's law, along with the little particle of error that clings to it, would have seemed like truth. But Regnault, being a man of science, did not indulge in such childishness, but continued his investigations and discovered that Boyle's law is in general only approximately correct, and in particular loses its validity in the case of gases which can be liquefied by pressure, as soon as the pressure approaches the point at which liquefaction begins. Boyle's law therefore was proved to be correct only within definite limits. But is it absolutely and finally true even within those limits? No physicist would assert that this was so. He would say that it holds good within certain limits of pressure and temperature and for certain gases; and even within these more restricted limits he would not exclude the possibility of a still narrower limitation or altered formulation as the result of future investigations. This is how things stand with final and ultimate truths in physics for example. Really scientific works therefore as a rule avoid such dogmatic and moral expressions as error and truth, while these expressions meet us everywhere in works such as the philosophy of reality, in which empty phrase-mongering attempts to impose on us as the sovereign result of sovereign thought....

If we have not made much progress with truth and error, we can make even less with good and bad. This antithesis belongs exclusively to the domain of morals, that is, a domain drawn from the history of mankind and it is precisely in this

field that final and ultimate truths are most sparsely sown. The conceptions of good and bad have varied so much from nation to nation and from age to age that they have often been in direct contradiction to each other. But all the same, someone may object, good is not bad and bad is not good; if good is confused with bad there is an end to all morality, and every one can do and leave undone whatever he cares. This is also, stripped of his oracular phrases, Herr Duhring's opinion. But the matter cannot be so simply disposed of. If it was such an easy business there would certainly be no dispute at all over good and bad; everyone would know what was good and what was bad. But how do things stand today? What morality is preached to us today? There is first Christian-feudal morality, inherited from past centuries of faith; and this again has two main subdivisions, Catholic and Protestant moralities, each of which in turn has no lack of further subdivisions from the Jesuit-Catholic and Orthodox-Protestant to loose "advanced" moralities. Alongside of these we find the modern bourgeois morality and with it too the proletarian morality of the future, so that in the most advanced European countries alone the past, present and future provide three great groups of moral theories which are in force simultaneously and alongside of each other. Which is then the true one? Not one of them, in the sense of having absolute validity; but certainly that morality which contains the maximum of durable elements is the one which, in the present, repre-



sents the overthrow of the present, represents the future: that is, the proletarian.

But when we see that the three classes of modern society, the feudal aristocracy, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, each have their special morality, we can only draw the one conclusion, that men, consciously or unconsciously, derive their moral ideas in the last resort from the practical relations on which their class position is based—from the economic relations in which they carry on production and exchange.

But nevertheless there is much that is common to the three moral theories mentioned above—is this not at least a portion of a morality which is externally fixed? These moral theories represent three different stages of the same historical development, and have therefore a common historical background, and for that reason alone they necessarily have much in common. Even more. In similar or approximately similar stages of economic development moral theories must of necessity be more or less in agreement. From the moment when private property in movable objects developed, in all societies in which this private property existed ~~there~~ must be this moral law in common: Thou shalt not steal. Does this law thereby become an eternal moral law? By no means. In a society in which the motive for stealing has been done away with, in which therefore at the very most only lunatics would ever steal, how the teacher of morals would be laughed at who tried solemnly to proclaim the eternal truth: Thou shalt not steal!

We therefore reject every attempt to impose on us any moral dogma whatsoever as an eternal, ultimate and for ever immutable moral law on the pretext that the moral world too has its permanent principles which transcend history and the differences between nations. We maintain on the contrary that all former moral theories are the product, in the last analysis, of the economic stage which society had reached at that particular epoch. And as society has hitherto moved in class antagonisms, morality was always a class morality, it has either justified the domination and the interests of the ruling class, or, as soon as the oppressed class has become powerful enough, it has represented the revolt against this domination and the future interests of the oppressed. That in this process there has on the whole been progress in morality, as in all other branches of human knowledge, cannot be doubted. But we have not yet passed beyond class morality. A really human morality which transcends class antagonisms and their legacies in thought becomes possible only at a stage of society which has not only overcome class contradictions but has even forgotten them in practical life.....

## MORALITY AND LAW: EQUALITY

.....The idea that all men, as men, have something in common, and that they are therefore equal so far as these common characteristics go, is of course primeval. But the modern demand for equality is something entirely different from that; this consists rather in deducing from those common characteristics of humanity, from that equality of men as men, a claim to equal political or social status for all human beings, or at least for all citizens of a state or all members of a society. Before the original conception of relative quality could lead to the conclusion that men should have equal rights in the state and in society, before this conclusion could appear to be something even natural and self-evident, however, thousands of years had to pass and did pass. In the oldest natural communities equality of rights existed at most for members of the community; women, slaves and strangers were excluded from this equality as a matter of course. Among the Greeks and Romans the inequalities of men were of greater importance than any form of equality. It would necessarily have seemed idiotic to the ancients that Greeks and barbarians, freemen and slaves, citizens and dependents, Roman citizens and Roman subjects (to use a comprehensive term) should have a claim to equal

political status. Under the Roman Empire all these distinctions gradually disappeared, except the distinction between freemen and slaves, and there arose, for the freemen at least, that equality as between private individuals on the basis of which Roman Law developed—the completest elaboration of law based on private property which we know. But so long as the distinction between freemen and slaves existed, there could be no talk of drawing legal conclusions from the fact of general equality *as men*; and we saw this again quite recently, in the slave-owning states of the North American Union.

Christianity knew only *one* point in which all men were equal: that all were equally born in original sin—which corresponded perfectly with its character as the religion of the slaves and the oppressed. Apart from this it recognised, at most, the equality of the elect, which however was only stressed at the very beginning. The traces of common ownership which are also found in the early stages of the new religion can be ascribed to the solidarity of a proscribed sect rather than to real equalitarian ideas. Within a very short time the establishment of the distinction between priests and laymen put an end even to this tendency to Christian equality. The overrunning of Western Europe by the Germans abolished for centuries all ideas of equality, through the gradual building up of such a complicated social and political hierarchy as had never before existed. But at the same time the invasion drew Western and Central Europe

into the course of historical development, created for the first time a compact cultural area, and within this area also for the first time a system of predominantly national states exerting mutual influence on each other and mutually holding each other in check. Thereby it prepared the ground on which alone the question of the equal status of men, of the rights of man, could at a later period be raised.

The feudal Middle Ages also developed in its womb the class which was destined in the future course of its evolution to be the standard-bearer of the modern demand for equality: the bourgeoisie. Itself in its origin one of the "estates" of the feudal order, the bourgeoisie developed the predominantly handicraft industry and the exchange of products within feudal society to a relatively high level, when at the end of the fifteenth century the great maritime discoveries opened to it a new and more far-reaching career. Trade beyond the confines of Europe, which had previously been carried on only between Italy and the Levant, was now extended to America and India, and soon surpassed in importance both the mutual exchange between the various European countries and the internal trade within each separate country. American gold and silver flooded Europe and forced its way like a disintegrating element into every fissure, hole and pore of feudal society. Handicraft industry could no longer satisfy the rising demand; in the leading industries of the most advanced countries it was replaced by manufacture.

But this mighty revolution in the economic

conditions of society was not followed by any immediate corresponding change in its political structure. The state order remained feudal, while society became more and more bourgeois. Trade on a large-scale, that is to say, international and, even more, world trade, requires free owners of commodities who are unrestricted in their movements and have equal rights as traders to exchange their commodities on the basis of laws that are equal for them all, at least in each separate place. The transition from handicraft to manufacture presupposes the existence of a number of free workers—free on the one hand from the fetters of the guild and on the other from the means whereby they could themselves utilise their labour power: workers who can contract with their employers for the hire of their labour power, and as parties to the contract have rights equal with his. And finally the equality and equal status of all human labour, because and in so far as it is *human* labour, found its unconscious but clearest expression in the law of value of modern bourgeois economy, according to which the value of a commodity is measured by the socially necessary labour embodied in it. But where economic relations required freedom and equality of rights, the political system opposed them at every step with guild restrictions and special privileges. Local privileges, differential duties, exceptional laws of all kinds in trade affected not only foreigners or people living in the colonies, but often enough also whole categories of the nationals of each country; the privileges of

the guilds everywhere and ever anew formed barriers to the path of development of manufacture. Nowhere was the path open and the changes equal for all the bourgeois competitors and yet this was the first and ever more pressing need.

The demand for liberation from feudal fetters and the establishment of equality of rights by the abolition of feudal inequalities was bound soon to assume wider dimensions from the moment when the economic advance of society first placed it on the order of the day. If it was raised in the interests of industry and trade, it was also necessary to demand the same equality of rights for the great mass of the peasantry who, in every degree of bondage from total serfdom upwards, were compelled to give the greater part of their labour time to their feudal lord without payment and in addition to pay innumerable other dues to him and to the state. On the other hand, it was impossible to avoid the demand for the abolition also of feudal privileges, the freedom from taxation of the nobility, the political privileges of the various feudal estates. And as people were no longer living in a world empire such as the Roman Empire had been, but in a system of independent states dealing with each other on an equal footing and at approximately the same stage of bourgeois development, it was a matter of course that the demand for equality should assume a general character reaching out beyond the individual state, that freedom and equality should be proclaimed as *human rights*. And it is significant of the specifically bourgeois charac-

ter of these human rights that the American Constitution, the first to recognise the rights of man, in the same breath confirmed the slavery of the coloured races then existing in America: class privileges were prescribed, race privileges sanctioned.

As is well known, however, from the moment when, like a butterfly from the chrysalis, the bourgeoisie arose out of the burghers of the feudal period, when this "estate" of the Middle Ages developed into a class of modern society, it was always and inevitably accompanied by its shadow, the proletariat. And in the same way the bourgeois demand for equality was accompanied by the proletarian demand for equality. From the moment when the bourgeois demand for the abolition of class privileges was put forward, alongside of it appeared the proletarian demand for the abolition of the *classes themselves*—at first in religious form, basing itself on primitive Christianity, and later drawing support from the bourgeois equalitarian theories themselves. The proletarians took the bourgeoisie at their word: equality must not be merely apparent, must not apply merely to the sphere of the state, but must also be real, must be extended to the social and economic sphere. And especially since the French bourgeoisie, from the great revolution on, brought bourgeois equality to the forefront, the French proletariat answered blow for blow with the demand for social and economic equality, and equality became the battle-cry particularly of the French proletariat.

The demand for equality in the mouth of the



proletariat has therefore a double meaning. It is either—as was the case at the very start, for example in the peasants' war—the spontaneous reaction against the crying social inequalities, against the contrast of rich and poor, the feudal lords and their serfs, surfeit and starvation; as such it is the simple expression of the revolutionary instinct, and finds its justification in that and indeed only in that. Or, on the other hand, the proletarian demand for equality has arisen as the reaction against the bourgeois demand for equality, drawing more or less correct and more far-reaching demands from this bourgeois demand, and serving as an agitational means in order to rouse the workers against the capitalists on the basis of the capitalists' own assertions; and in this case it stands and falls with bourgeois equality itself. In both cases the real content of the proletarian demand for equality is the demand for the *abolition of classes*. Any demand for equality which goes beyond that, of necessity passes into absurdity.....

The idea of equality, therefore, both in its bourgeois and in its proletarian form, is itself a historical product, the creation of which required definite historical conditions which in turn themselves presuppose a long previous historical development. It is therefore anything but an eternal truth. And if today it is taken for granted by the general public—in one sense or another—if, as Marx says, it “already possesses the fixity of a popular prejudice,” this is not the consequence of its axiomatic truth, but the result of the general diffusion and the

continued appropriateness of the ideas of the eighteenth century.....

## MORALITY AND LAW: FREEDOM AND NECESSITY ,

.....Hegel was the first to state correctly the relation between freedom and necessity. To him, freedom is the appreciation of necessity. "Necessity is *blind* only *in so far as it is not understood*". Freedom does not consist in the dream of independence of natural laws, but in the knowledge of these laws, and in the possibility this affords of systematically making them work towards definite ends. This holds good in relation both to the laws of external nature and to those which govern the bodily and mental life of men themselves—two classes of laws which we can separate from each other at most only in thought but not in reality. Freedom of the will therefore means nothing but the capacity to make decisions with real knowledge of the subject. Therefore the *freer* a man's judgment is in relation to a definite question, with so much the greater necessity is the content of this judgment determined; while the uncertainty, founded on ignorance, which seems to make an arbitrary choice among many different and conflicting possible decisions, shows by this precisely that it is not free, that it is controlled by the very object it should itself control. Freedom therefore consists in the control over ourselves and over external

nature which is founded on knowledge of natural necessity; it is therefore necessarily a product of historical development. The first men who separated themselves from the animal kingdom were in all essentials as unfree as the animals themselves, but each step forward in civilisation was a step towards freedom. On the threshold of human history stands the discovery that mechanical motion can be transformed into heat: the production of fire by friction; at the close of the development so far gone through stands the discovery that heat can be transformed into mechanical motion: the steam engine. And, in spite of the gigantic and liberating revolution in the social world which the steam engine is carrying through—and which is not yet half completed—it is beyond the question that the generation of fire by friction was of even greater effectiveness for the liberation of mankind. For the generation of fire by friction gave man for the first time control over one of the forces of Nature and thereby separated him for ever from the animal kingdom. The steam engine will never bring about such a mighty leap forward in human development, however important it may seem in our eyes as representing all those immense productive forces dependent on it—forces which alone make possible a state of society in which there are no longer class distinctions or anxiety over the means of subsistence for the individual, and in which for the first time there can be talk of real human freedom and of an existence in harmony with the established laws of Nature. But how

young the whole of human history still is, and how ridiculous it would be to attempt to ascribe any absolute validity to our present views, is evident from the simple fact that all past history can be characterised as the history of the epoch from the practical discovery of the transformation of mechanical motion into heat up to that of the transformation of heat into mechanical motion.....

## DIALECTICS: QUANTITY AND QUALITY

.....So long as we consider things as static and lifeless, each one by itself, alongside of and after each other, it is true that we do not run up against any contradictions in them. We find certain qualities which are partly common to, partly diverse from, and even contradictory to each other, but which in this case are distributed among different objects and therefore contain no contradiction. Within the limits of this sphere of thought we can get along on the basis of the usual metaphysical mode of thought. But the position is quite different as soon as we consider things in their motion, their change, their life, their reciprocal influence on each other. Then we immediately become involved in contradictions. Motion itself is a contradiction: even simple mechanical change of place can only come about through a body at one and the same moment of time being both in one place and in another place, being in one and the same place and also not in it. And the continuous assertion and simultaneous solution of this contradiction is precisely what motion is.

And if simple mechanical change of place contains a contradiction, this is even more true of the higher forms of motion of matter, and especially of organic life and its development. We saw

above that life consists just precisely in this—that a living thing is at each moment itself and yet something else. Life is therefore also a contradiction which is present in things and processes themselves and which constantly asserts and solves itself; and as soon as the contradiction ceases, life too comes to an end, and death steps in. We likewise saw that also in the sphere of thought we could not avoid contradictions, and that for example the contradiction between man's inherently unlimited faculty of knowledge and its actual realisation in men who are limited by their external conditions and limited also in their intellectual faculties finds its solution in what is, for us at least, and from a practical standpoint, an endless succession of generations, in infinite progress .....

On page 336<sup>1</sup> Marx, on the basis of the previous examination of constant and variable capital and surplus value, draws the conclusion that "not every sum of money, or of value, is at pleasure transformable into capital. To effect this transformation, in fact, a certain minimum of money or of exchange-value must be presupposed in the hands of the individual possessor of money or commodities."

He then takes as an example the case of a labourer in any branch of industry, who works eight hours for himself—that is, in producing the value of his wages—and the following four hours for the capitalist, in producing surplus value, which

<sup>1</sup> Capital, Vol. I (Kerr edition).

immediately flows into the pocket of the capitalist. In this case a capitalist would have to dispose of a sum of value sufficient to enable him to provide two labourers with raw materials, instruments of labour, and wages, in order to appropriate enough surplus value every day to enable him to live on it even as well as one of his labourers. And as the aim of capitalist production is not mere subsistence but the increase of wealth, our man with his two labourers would still not be a capitalist. Now in order that he may live twice as well as an ordinary labourer, and besides turn half of the surplus value produced again into capital, he would have to be able to employ eight labourers, that is he would have to dispose of four times the sum of value assumed above. And it is only after this, and in the course of still further explanations elucidating and establishing the fact that not every petty sum of value is enough to be transformable into capital, but that the minimum sum required varies with each period of development and each branch of industry it is only then that Marx observes: "Here, as in natural science, is *verified* the correctness of the law discovered by Hegel (in his *Logic*) that merely quantitative changes beyond a certain point pass into qualitative differences...."



## DIALECTICS: NEGATION OF THE NEGATION

.....But what role does the negation of the negation play in Marx? On page 834<sup>1</sup> and the following pages he sets out the conclusions which he draws from the preceding fifty pages of economic and historical investigation into the so-called primitive accumulation of capital. Before the capitalist era, at least in England, petty industry existed on the basis of the private property of the labourer in his means of production. The so-called primitive accumulation of capital consisted in this case in the expropriation of these immediate producers, that is, in the dissolution of private property based on the labour of its owner. This was possible because the petty industry referred to above is compatible only with a system of production, and a society, moving within narrow and primitive bounds, and at a certain stage of its development it brings forth the material agencies for its own annihilation. This annihilation, the transformation of the individual and scattered means of production into socially concentrated ones forms the pre-history of capital. As soon as the labourers are turned into proletarians, their means

<sup>1</sup> Capital, Vol. I (Kerr edition).

of labour into capital, as soon as the capitalist mode of production stands on its own feet, the further socialisation of labour and further transformation of the land and other means of production, and therefore the further expropriation of private proprietors, takes a new form.

“That which is now to be expropriated is no longer the labourer working for himself, but the capitalist exploiting many labourers. This expropriation is accomplished by the action of the immanent laws of capitalistic production itself, by the centralisation of capital. One capitalist always kills many. Hand in hand with this centralisation, or this expropriation of many capitalists by few, develop, on an ever extending scale, the cooperative form of the labour process, the conscious technical application of science, the methodical cultivation of the soil, the transformation of the instruments of labour into instruments of labour only usable in common, the economising of all means of production by their use of the means of production of combined, socialised labour..... Along with the constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital, who usurp and monopolise all advantages of this process of transformation, grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation; but with this too grows the revolt of the working class, a class always increasing in number, and disciplined, united, organised by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself. The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of produc-

tion, which has sprung up and flourished along with, and under it. Centralisation of the means of production and socialisation of labour at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated.”<sup>1</sup>

Marx merely shows from history, and in this passage states in a summarised form, that just as the former petty industry necessarily, through its own development, created the conditions of its annihilation, i.e., of the expropriation of the small proprietors, so now the capitalist mode of production has likewise itself created the material condition which will annihilate it. The process is a historical one, and if it is at the same time a dialectical process, this is not Marx’s fault, however annoying it may be for Herr Duhring.

It is only at this point, after Marx has completed his proof on the basis of historical and economic facts, that he proceeds: “The capitalist mode of production and appropriation, and hence capitalist private property, is the first negation of individual private property founded on the labours of the proprietor. But capitalist production begets, with the inexorability of a law of Nature, its own negation. It is the negation of the negation”—and so on (as quoted above).

In characterising the process as the negation of, the negation, therefore, Marx does not dream

<sup>1</sup> Capital, Vol. I, pp. 836-37 (Kerr edition).

of attempting to prove by this that the process was historically necessary. On the contrary: after he has proved from history that in fact the process has partially already occurred, and partially must occur in the future, he then also characterises it as a process which develops in accordance with a definite dialectical law. That is all. It is therefore once again a pure distortion of the facts by Herr Duhring, when he declares that the negation of the negation has to serve here as the midwife to deliver the future from the womb of the past, or that Marx wants anyone to allow himself to be convinced of the necessity of the common ownership of land and capital (which is itself a Duhringian corporeal contradiction) on the basis of the negation of the negation.

Herr Duhring's total lack of understanding as to the nature of dialectics is shown by the very fact that he regards it as a mere instrument through which things can be proved, as in a more limited way formal logic or elementary mathematics can be regarded. Even formal logic is primarily a method of arriving at new results, of advancing from the known to the unknown—and dialectics is the same, only in a more important sense, because in forcing its way beyond the narrow horizon of formal logic, it contains the germ of a more comprehensive view of the world. It is the same with mathematics. Elementary mathematics, the mathematics of constant magnitudes, moves within the confines of formal logic, at any rate taken as a whole; the mathematics of variable magnitudes, whose

most important part is the infinitesimal calculus, is in essence nothing other than the application of dialectics to mathematical relations; in it, the simple question of proof is definitely pushed into the background, as compared with the manifold application of the method to new spheres of research. But almost all the proofs of higher mathematics, from the first—that of the differential calculus—on are false, from the standpoint of elementary mathematics taken rigidly. And it is necessarily so when, as happens in this case, an attempt is made to prove by formal logic results obtained in the field of dialectics. To attempt to prove anything by means of dialectics alone to a crass metaphysician like Herr Duhring would be as much a waste of time as the attempt made by Leibniz and his pupils to prove the principles of the infinitesimal calculus to the mathematicians of his time. The differential calculus produced in them the same convulsions as Herr Duhring gets from the negation of the negation, in which, moreover, as we shall see, the differential calculus also plays a certain role. Ultimately these gentlemen—or those of them who had not died in the interval—gudgingly gave way, not because they were convinced, but because it always produced correct results. Herr Duhring, as he himself tells us, has only just entered the forties, and if he attains old age, as we hope he may, perhaps his experience will be the same.

• But what then is this fearful negation of the negation, which makes life so bitter for Herr Duh-

ring and fulfils the same role with him of the unpardonable crime as the sin against the Holy Ghost does in Christianity?—A very simple process which is taking place everywhere and every day, which any child can understand, as soon as it is stripped of the veil of mystery in which it was wrapped by the old idealist philosophy and in which it is to the advantage of helpless metaphysicians of Herr Duhring's calibre to keep it enveloped. Let us take a grain of barley. Millions of such grains of barley are milled, boiled and brewed and then consumed. But if such a grain of barley meets with conditions which for it are normal, if it falls on suitable soil, then under the influence of heat and moisture a specific change takes place, it germinates; the grain as such ceases to exist, it is negated, and in its place appears the plant which has arisen from it, the negation of the grain. But what is the normal life-process of this plant? It grows, flowers, is fertilised and finally once more produces grains of barley, and as soon as these have ripened the stalk dies, is in its turn negated. As a result of this negation of the negation we have once again the original grain of barley, but not as a single unit, but ten, twenty or thirty fold. Species of grain change extremely slowly, and so the barley of today is almost the same as it was a century ago.

But if we take an artificially cultivated ornamental plant, for example a dahlia or an orchid: if we treat the seed and the plant which grows from it as a gardener does, we get as the result

of this negation of the negation not only more seeds, but also qualitatively better seeds, which produce more beautiful flowers, and each fresh repetition of this process, each repeated negation of the negation increases this improvement. With most insects, this process follows the same lines as in the case of the grain of barley. Butterflies, for example, spring from the egg through a negation of the egg, they pass through certain transformations until they reach sexual maturity, they pair and are in turn negated, dying as soon as the pairing process has been completed and the female had laid its numerous eggs. We are not concerned at the moment with the fact that with other plants and animals the process does not take such a simple form, that before they die they produce seeds, eggs or offspring not once but many times; our purpose here is only to show that the negation of the negation *takes place in reality* in both divisions of the organic world. Furthermore, the whole of geology is a series of negated negations, a series arising from the successive shattering of old and the depositing of new rock formations. First the original earth-crust brought into existence by the cooling of the liquid mass was broken up by oceanic, meteorological and atmospherico-chemical action, and these disintegrated masses were deposited on the ocean floor. Local elevations of the ocean floor above the surface of the sea, subject portions of these first strata once more to the action of rain, the changing temperature of the seasons and the oxygen and carbonic acid of the atmosphere.

These same influences acted on the molten masses of rock which issued from the interior of the earth, broke through the strata and subsequently solidified. In this way, in the course of millions of centuries, ever new strata are formed and in turn are for the most part destroyed, ever anew serving as material for the formation of new strata. But the result of this process has been a very positive one: the creation, out of the most varied chemical elements, of a mixed and mechanically pulverised soil which makes possible the most abundant and diverse vegetation.

It is the same in mathematics. Let us take any algebraical magnitude whatever: for example,  $a$ . If this is negated, we get  $-a$  (minus  $a$ ). If we negate that negation, by multiplying  $-a$  by  $-a$ , we get  $a^2$ , i.e., the original positive magnitude, but at a higher degree, raised to its second power. In this case also it makes no difference that we can reach the same  $a^2$  by multiplying the positive  $a$  by itself thus also getting  $a^2$ . For the negated negation is so securely entrenched in  $a^2$  that the latter always has two square roots, namely  $a$  and  $-a$ . And the fact that it is impossible to get rid of the negated negation, the negative root of the square, acquires very obvious significance as soon as we get as far as quadratic equations. The negation of the negation is even more strikingly obvious in the higher analyses, in those "summation of indefinitely small magnitudes" which Herr Duhring himself declares are the highest operations of mathematics, and in ordinary language are known as the



differential and integral calculus. How are these forms of calculus used? In a given problem, for example, I have two variable magnitudes  $x$  and  $y$ , neither of which can vary without the other also varying in a relation determined by the conditions of the case. I differentiate  $x$  and  $y$ , i.e., I take  $x$  and  $y$  as so infinitely small that in comparison with any real magnitude, however small, they disappear, so that nothing is left of  $x$  and  $y$  but their reciprocal relation without any, so to speak, material basis, a quantitative relation in which there is no quantity. Therefore,  $dy/dx$ , the relation between the differentials of  $x$  and  $y$  is equal to  $O/O$ , but  $O/O$  as the expression of  $y/x$ . I only mention in passing that this relation between two magnitudes which have disappeared, caught at the moment of their disappearance, is a contradiction; it cannot disturb us any more than it has disturbed the whole of mathematics for almost two hundred years. And yet what have I done but negate  $x$  and  $y$ , though not in a way that I need not bother about them any more, not in the way that metaphysics negates but in the way that corresponds with the facts of the case? In place of  $x$  and  $y$ , therefore, I have their negation,  $dx$  and  $dy$  in the formulae or equations before me. I continue then to operate with these formulae, treating  $dx$  and  $dy$  as magnitudes which are real, though subject to certain exceptional laws, and at a certain point I negate the negation, i.e., I integrate the differential formula, and in place of  $dx$  and  $dy$  again get the real magnitudes  $x$  and  $y$ , and am not then where I was at the beginning,

but by using this method I have solved the problem on which ordinary geometry and algebra might perhaps have broken their teeth in vain.

It is the same, too, in history. All civilised peoples begin with the common ownership of the land. With all peoples who have passed a certain primitive stage, in the course of the development of agriculture this common ownership becomes a fetter on production. It is abolished, negated, and after a longer or shorter series of intermediate stages is transformed into private property. But at a higher stage of agricultural development, brought about by private property in land itself, private property in turn becomes a fetter on production as is the case today, both with small and large land ownership. The demand that it also should be negated, that should once again be transformed into common property, necessarily arises. But this demand does not mean the restoration of the old original common ownership, but the institution of a far higher and more developed form of possession in common which, far from being a hindrance to production, on the contrary for the first time frees production from all fetters and gives it the possibility of making full use of modern ~~chemical~~ discoveries and mechanical inventions.

Or let us take another example: the philosophy of antiquity was primitive, natural materialism. As such, it was incapable of clearing up the relation between thought and matter. But the need to get clarity on this question led to the doctrine of a soul separable from the body, then to the assertion of the

immortality of this soul, and finally to monotheism. The old materialism was therefore negated by idealism. But in the course of the further development of philosophy, idealism too became untenable and was negated by modern materialism. This modern materialism, the negation of the negation, is not the mere re-establishment of the old but adds to the permanent foundations of this old materialism the whole thought content of two thousand years of developments of philosophy and natural science, as well as of the historical development of these two thousand years. It is in fact no longer a philosophy, but a simple conception of the world which has to establish its validity and be applied not in a science of sciences standing apart, but within the positive sciences. In this development philosophy is therefore "sublated," that is, "both abolished and preserved"; abolished as regards its form, and preserved as regards its real content.

What therefore is the negation of the negation? An extremely general—and for this reason extremely comprehensive and important—law of development of Nature, history and thought; a law which, as we have ~~seen~~ holds good in the animal and plant kingdoms, in geology, in mathematics, in history and in philosophy—a law which even Herr Dühring, in spite of all his struggles and resistance, has unwittingly and in his own way to follow. It is obvious that in describing any evolutionary process as the negation of the negation I do not say anything concerning the *particular* process of deve-

lopment, for example, of the grain of barley from germination to the death of the fruit-bearing plant. For, as the integral calculus also is a negation of the negation, if I said anything of the sort I should only be making the nonsensical statement that the life-process of a barley plant was the integral calculus or for that matter that it was socialism. That, however, is what the metaphysicians are constantly trying to impute to dialectics. When I say that all these processes are the negation of the negation, I bring them all together under this one law of motion, and for this very reason I leave out of account the peculiarities of each separate individual process. Dialectics is nothing more than the science of the general laws of motion and development of Nature, human society and thought.....

### SECTION III

## HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

By ENGELS

*The following essay was written by Engels in 1892 as an introduction to the first English edition of his book Socialism, Utopian and Scientific. At that time the theory of scientific socialism as worked out by Marx and Engels was ignored in England. Though materialism was born earlier in England than on the Continent, Bacon being the real progenitor of English materialism, the materialist outlook made little headway in England until the end of the nineteenth century. "Agnosticism" remained more acceptable to British thinkers. In the following pages Engels tries to analyse the causes of this mental sluggishness in Great Britain. The central theme of this essay however is the interpretation of social development in the light of the materialist conception of history. Marx and Engels claimed that the laws of dialectics were as much applicable to society as to nature, and they worked out a theory of social development which they called the theory of Historical Materialism. In this essay Engels illustrates by reference to actual historical facts, the basic concepts of this theory.*

## HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

I am perfectly aware that the contents of this essay will meet with objection from a considerable portion of the British public. But if we Continentals had taken the slightest notice of the prejudices of British "respectability", we should be even worse off than we are. This book defends what we call "historical materialism," and the word materialism grates upon the ears of the immense majority of British readers. "Agnosticism" might be tolerated, but materialism is utterly inadmissible.

And yet the original home of all modern materialism, from the seventeenth century onwards, is England.

"Materialism is the natural-born son of Great Britain. Already the British schoolman, Duns Scotus, asked 'whether it was impossible for matter to think?'

"In order to effect this miracle, he took refuge in God's omnipotence, *i.e.*, he made theology preach materialism. Moreover, he was a nominalist. Nominalism, the first form of materialism, is chiefly found among the English schoolmen.

"The real progenitor of English materialism is Bacon. To him natural philosophy is the only true philosophy, and physics based upon the experience

of the senses is the chiefest part of natural philosophy. Anaxagoras and his homoiomeria, Democritus and his atoms, he often quotes as his authorities. According to him the senses are infallible and the source of all knowledge. All science is based on experience, and consists in subjecting the data furnished by the senses to a rational method of investigation. Induction, analysis, comparison, observation, experiment, are the principal forms of such a rational method. Among the qualities inherent in matter, motion is the first and foremost, not only in the form of mechanical and mathematical motion, but chiefly in the form of an impulse, a vital spirit, a tension—or a 'qual,' to use a term of Jacob Bohme's<sup>1</sup>—of matter.

"In Bacon, its first creator, materialism still occludes within itself the germs of a many-sided development. On the one hand, matter, surrounded by a sensuous, poetic glamour, seems to attract man's whole entity by winning smiles. On the other, the aphoristically formulated doctrine pullulates with inconsistencies imported from theology.

"In its further evolution, materialism be-

<sup>1</sup> "Qual" is a philosophical play upon words. Qual literally means torture, a pain which drives to action of some kind; at the same time the mystic Bohme puts into the German word something of the meaning of the Latin "qualitus"; his "qual" was the activating principle arising from, and promoting in its turn, the spontaneous development of the thing, relation, or person subject to it, in contradistinction to a pain inflicted from without.

comes one-sided. Hobbes is the man who systematises Baconian materialism. Knowledge based upon the senses loses its poetic blossoms, it passes into the abstract experience of the mathematician; geometry is proclaimed as the queen of sciences. Materialism takes to misanthropy. If it is to overcome its opponent, misanthropic, fleshless spiritualism, and that on the latter's own ground, materialism has to chastise its own flesh and turn ascetic. Thus, from a sensual, it passes into an intellectual, entity; but thus, too, it evolves all the consistency, regardless of consequences, characteristic of the intellect.

"Hobbes, as Bacon's continuator, argues thus; if all human knowledge is furnished by the senses, then our concepts and ideas are but the phantoms, divested of their sensual forms, of the real world. Philosophy can but give names to these phantoms. One name may be applied to more than one of them. There may even be names of names. It would imply a contradiction if, on the one hand, we maintained that all ideas had their origin in the world of sensation, and, on the other, that a word was more than a word; that besides the beings known to us by our senses, beings which are one and all individuals there existed also beings of a general, not individual, nature. An unbodily substance is the same absurdity as an unbodily body. Body, being, substance, are but different terms for the same reality. *It is impossible to separate thought from matter that thinks.* This matter is the substratum of all changes going on in the world. The word



infinite is meaningless, unless it states that our mind is capable of performing an endless process of addition. Only material things being perceptible to us, we cannot know anything about the existence of God. My own existence alone is certain. Every human passion is a mechanical movement, which has a beginning and an end. The objects of impulse are what we call good. Man is subject to the same laws as nature. Power and freedom are identical.

"Hobbes had systematised. Bacon, without, however, furnishing a proof for Bacon's fundamental principle, the origin of all human knowledge from the world of sensation. It was Locke who, in his *Essay on the Human Understanding*, supplied this proof.

"Hobbes had shattered the theistic prejudices of Baconian materialism; Collins, Dodwall, Coward, Hartley, Priestley similarly shattered the last theological bars that still hemmed in Locke's sensationalism. At all events, for practical materialists, theism is but an easy-going way of getting rid of religion."<sup>1</sup>

Thus Karl Marx wrote about the British origin of modern materialism. If Englishmen nowadays do not exactly relish the compliment he paid their ancestors, mine's the pity. It is none the less undeniable that Bacon, Hobbes, and Locke are the fathers of that brilliant school of French materialists which made the eighteenth century, in spite

<sup>1</sup> Marx and Engels, *Die Heilige Familie*, Frankfurt, M. 1845, pp. 201-204.

of all battles on land and sea won over Frenchmen by Germans and Englishmen, a pre-eminently French century, even before that crowning French Revolution, the results of which we outsiders, in England as well as in Germany, are still trying to acclimatise.

There is no denying it. About the middle of this century, what struck every cultivated foreigner who set up his residence in England, was, what he was then bound to consider the religious bigotry and stupidity of the English respectable middle class. We, at that time, were all materialists, or, at least, very advanced free-thinkers, and to us it appeared inconceivable that almost all educated people in England should believe in all sorts of impossible miracles, and that even geologists like Buckland and Mantell should contort the facts of their science so as not to clash too much with the myths of the book of Genesis; while, in order to find people who dared to use their own intellectual faculties with regard to religious matters, you had to go amongst the uneducated, the "great unwashed," as they were then called, the working people, especially the Owenite Socialists.

But England has been "civilised" since then. The exhibition of 1851 sounded the ~~knell~~ of English insular exclusiveness. England became gradually internationalised, in diet, in manners, in ideas; so much so that I begin to wish that some English manners and customs had made as much headway on the Continent as other Continental habits have made here. Anyhow, the introduction and spread

of salad-oil (before 1851 known only to the aristocracy) has been accompanied by a fatal spread of continental scepticism in matters religious, and it has come to this, that agnosticism, though not yet considered "the thing" quite as much as the Church of England, is yet very nearly on a par, as far as respectability goes, with Baptism, and decidedly ranks above the Salvation Army. And I cannot help believing that under these circumstances it will be consoling to many who sincerely regret and condemn this progress of infidelity, to learn that these "new fangled notions" are not of foreign origin, are not "made in Germany," like so many other articles of daily use, but are undoubtedly Old English, and that their British originators two hundred years ago went a good deal further than their descendants now dare to venture.

What, indeed, is agnosticism, but, to use an expressive Lancashire term, "shamefaced" materialism? The agnostic's conception of Nature is materialistic throughout. The entire natural world is governed by law, and absolutely excludes the intervention of action from without. But, he adds, we have no means either of ascertaining or of disproving the existence of some Supreme Being beyond the known universe. Now, this might hold good at the time when Laplace, to Napoleon's question, why in the great astronomer's *Mécanique celeste* the Creator was not even mentioned, proudly replied: *Je n'avais pas besoin de cette hypothèse*. But nowadays, in our revolutionary conception of the universe, there is absolutely no room for either a

Creator or a Ruler, and to talk of a Supreme Being shut out from the whole existing world, implies a contradiction in terms, and, as it seems to me, a gratuitous insult to the feelings of religious people.

Again, our agnostic admits that all our knowledge is based upon the information imparted to us by our senses. But, he adds, how do we know that our senses give us correct representation of the objects we perceive through them? And he proceeds to inform us that, whenever he speaks of objects or their qualities he does in reality not mean these objects and qualities, of which he cannot know anything for certain, but merely the impressions which they have produced on his senses. Now, this line of reasoning seems undoubtedly hard to beat by mere argumentation. But before there was argumentation, there was action. *Im Anfang war die That.* And human action had solved the difficulty long before human ingenuity invented it. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. From the moment we turn to our own use these objects, according to the qualities we perceive in them, we put to an infallible test the correctness or otherwise of our sense-perceptions. If these perceptions have been wrong, then our estimate of the use to which an object can be turned must also be wrong, and our attempt must fail. But if we succeed in accomplishing our aim, if we find that the object does agree with our idea of it, and does answer the purpose we intended it for, then that is positive proof that our perceptions of it and of its qualities, *so far*, agree with reality outside our-

selves. And whenever we find ourselves face to face with a failure, then we generally are not long in making out the cause that made us fail; we find that the perception upon which we acted was either incomplete and superficial, or combined with the results of other perceptions in a way not warranted by them—what we call defective reasoning. So long as we take care to train and to use our senses properly, and to keep our action within the limits prescribed by perceptions properly made and properly used, so long we shall find that the result of our action proves the conformity of our perceptions with the objective nature of the things perceived. Not in one single instance, so far, have we been led to the conclusion that our sense-perceptions, scientifically controlled, induce in our minds ideas respecting the outer world that are, by their very nature, at variance with reality, or that there is an inherent incompatibility between the outer world and our sense-perceptions of it.

But then come the Neo-Kantian agnostics and say: We may correctly perceive the qualities of a thing, but we cannot by any sensible or mental process grasp the thing in itself. This "thing in itself" is beyond our ken. To this Hegel, long since, has replied: If you know all the qualities of a thing, you know the thing itself: nothing remains but the fact that the said thing exists without us; and when your senses have taught you that fact, you have grasped the last remnant of the thing in itself, Kant's celebrated unknowable *Ding an sich*. To which it may be added, that in Kant's time our

knowledge of natural objects was indeed so fragmentary that he might well suspect, behind the little we knew about each of them, a mysterious "thing in itself." But one after another these ungraspable things have been grasped, analysed, and, what is more, *reproduced* by the giant process of science; and what we can produce, we certainly cannot consider as unknowable. To the chemistry of the first half of this century organic substances were such mysterious objects; now, we learn to build them up one after another from their chemical elements, without the aid of organic processes. Modern chemists declare that as soon as the chemical constitution of no matter what body is known, it can be built up from its elements. We are still far from knowing the constitution of the highest organic substances, the albuminous bodies; but there is no reason why we should not, if only after centuries, arrive at that knowledge, and, armed with it, produce artificial albumen. But if we arrive at that, we shall at the same time have produced organic life, for life, from its lowest to its highest forms, is but the normal mode of existence of albuminous bodies.

As soon, however, as our agnostic has made these formal mental reservations, he talks and acts as the rank materialist he at bottom is. He may say that, as far as *we* know, matter and motion, or as it is now called, energy, can neither be created nor destroyed, but that we have no proof of their not having been created at some time or other. But if you try to raise this admission against him in any

particular case, he will quickly put you out of court. If he admits the possibility of spiritualism *in abstracto*, he will have none of it *in concreto*. As far as we know and can know, he will tell you there is no Creator and no Ruler of the universe; as far as we are concerned, matter and energy can neither be created nor annihilated; for us, mind is a mode of energy, a function of the brain; all we know is that the material world is governed by immutable laws, and so forth. Thus, as far as he is a scientific man, as far as he *knows* anything, he is a materialist; outside his science, in spheres about which he knows nothing, he translates his ignorance into Greek and calls it agnosticism.

At all events, one thing seems clear: even if I were an agnostic, it is evident that I could not describe the conception of history sketched out in this little book as "historical agnosticism." Religious people would laugh at me, agnostics would indignantly ask, was I going to make fun of them? And thus I hope even British respectability will not be overshocked if I use, in English as well as in so many other languages, the term "historical materialism," to designate that view of the course of history which seeks the ultimate cause and the great moving power of all important historic events in the economic development of society, in the changes in the modes of production and exchange, in the consequent division of society into distinct classes, and in the struggles of these classes against each other.

This indulgence will perhaps be accorded to

me all the sooner if I show that historical materialism may be of advantage even to British respectability. I have mentioned the fact that about forty or fifty years ago, any cultivated foreigner settling in England was struck by what he was then bound to consider the religious bigotry and stupidity of the English respectable middle class. I am now going to prove that the English respectable middle class of that time was not quite so stupid as it looked to the intelligent foreigner. Its religious leanings can be explained.

When Europe emerged from the Middle Ages, the rising middle class of the towns constituted its revolutionary element. It had conquered a recognised position within medieval feudal organisations, but this position, also, had become too narrow for its expansive power. The development of the middle class, the *bourgeoisie*,<sup>1</sup> became incompatible

<sup>1</sup> In the earlier days of feudalism the serfs especially privileged by their lord to carry on a craft usually settled at some point commanded by the seignorial castle or otherwise protected from foreign attack by walls and towers upon which the lord's men-at-arms mounted guard night and day. The town thus formed and fortified was called in French a "bourg" (in German, "burg"; in Scotch, "burgh"; in English, "borough"). The duly qualified craftsmen, artisans, and traders who inhabited it, therefore came to be called "bourgeois," and as a body constituted the "bourgeoisie."

In the course of time many "bourgs" became singly or collectively strong enough to resist the exactions of their respective lords, and even to assert their independence when it happened that the latter had been weakened by conflicts among themselves or with the king. Moreover, as the ex-



with the maintenance of the feudal system; the feudal system, therefore, had to fall.

But the great international centre of feudalism was the Roman Catholic Church. It united the whole of feudalised Western Europe, in spite of all internal wars, into one grand political system, opposed as much to the schismatic Greeks as to the Mohammedan countries. It surrounded feudal institutions with the halo of divine consecration. It had organised its own hierarchy on the feudal model, and lastly, it was itself by far the most powerful feudal lord, holding, as it did, fully one-third of the soil of the Catholic world. Before profane

change of products between the "bourgs" began to develop, the artisans and traders required other labour than their own to meet the growing demand for their wares. This was eagerly supplied by the rural serfs, who had remained at the complete mercy of the lords. Many of them ran away from the fertile fields in which they were not only held in bondage but starved, and took refuge in the "bourgs," where they could get a somewhat better living, also perchance a little more freedom, in the service of their former fellow serfs. Thus did, simultaneously with the formation of an exploiting mercantile class named the "Bourgeoisie," occur the formation of an exploited wage-working class named the "Proletariat"—that is, of a class of so-called free men, who owning nothing but their labour-power, had to sell it in order to live and reproduce their kind. This expression, "the Proletariat," is indeed not less significant than appropriate, the Latin word "proles," from which it is derived, meaning "offspring." It was first applied in Rome to the same class of people who, notwithstanding their absolute lack of possessions, were counted as "proletarii" in the census of Servius Tullius, because of the value of their kind to the State.

feudalism could be successfully attacked in each country and in detail, this, its sacred central organisation, had to be destroyed.

Moreover, parallel with the rise of the middle class went on the great revival of science; astronomy, mechanics, physics, anatomy, physiology, were again cultivated. And the bourgeoisie, for the development of its industrial production, required a science which ascertained the physical properties of natural objects and the modes of action of the forces of Nature. Now up to then science had been but the humble handmaid of the Church, had not been allowed to overstep the limits set by faith, and for that reason had been no science at all. Science rebelled against the Church; the bourgeoisie could not do without science, and, therefore, had to join in the rebellion.

The above, though touching but two of the points where the rising middle class was bound to come into collision with the established religion, will be sufficient to show, first, that the class most directly interested in the struggle against the pretensions of the Roman Church was the bourgeoisie; and, second, that every struggle against feudalism, at that time, had to take on a religious disguise, had to be directed against the Church in the first instance. But if the universities and the traders of the cities started the cry, it was sure to find, and did find, a strong echo in the masses of the country people, the peasants, who everywhere had to struggle for their very existence with their feudal lords, spiritual and temporal.

The long fight of the bourgeoisie against feudalism culminated in three great, decisive battles.

The first was what is called the Protestant Reformation in Germany. The war-cry raised against the Church by Luther was responded to by two insurrections of a political nature; first, that of the lower nobility under Franz von Sickingen, 1523; then the great Peasants' War, 1525. Both were defeated, chiefly in consequence of the indecision of the parties most interested, the burghers of the towns—an indecision into the causes of which we cannot here enter. From that moment the struggle degenerated into a fight between the local princes and the central power, and ended by blotting out Germany for two hundred years from the politically active nations of Europe. The Lutheran reformation produced a new creed indeed, a religion adapted to absolute monarchy. No sooner were the peasants of North-East Germany converted to Lutheranism than they were from freeman reduced to serfs.

But where Luther failed, Calvin won the day. Calvin's creed was one fit for the boldest of the bourgeoisie of his time. His predestination doctrine was the religious expression of the fact that in the commercial world of competition success or failure does not depend upon a man's activity or cleverness, but upon circumstances uncontrollable by him. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of the mercy of unknown superior economic powers; and this was especially true at a period of economic revolution, when all old com-

mercial routes and centres were replaced by new ones when, India and America were opened to the world, and when even the most sacred economic articles of faith—the value of gold and silver—began to totter and to break down. Calvin's church constitution was thoroughly democratic and republican; and where the kingdom of God was republicanised, could the kingdoms of this world remain subject to monarchs, bishops, and lords? While German Lutheranism became a willing tool in the hands of princes, Calvinism founded republic in Holland, and active republican parties in England, and, above all, Scotland.

In Calvinism, the second great bourgeois upheaval found its doctrine ready cut and dried. This upheaval took place in England. The middle class of the towns brought it on, and the yeomanry of the country districts fought it out. Curiously enough, in all the three great bourgeois risings, the peasantry furnishes the army that has to do the fighting; and the peasantry is just the class that, the victory once gained, is most surely ruined by the economic consequences of that victory. A hundred years after Cromwell, the yeomanry of England had almost disappeared. Anyhow, had it not been for that yeomanry and for the *plebeian* element in the towns, the bourgeoisie alone would never have fought the matter out to the bitter end, and would never have brought Charles I to the scaffold. In order to secure even those conquests of the bourgeoisie that were ripe for gathering at the time, the revolution had to be carried considerably further

—exactly as in 1793 in France and 1848 in Germany. This seems, in fact, to be one of the laws of evolution of bourgeois society.

Well, upon this excess of revolutionary activity there necessarily followed the inevitable reaction which in its turn went beyond the point where it might have maintained itself. After a series of oscillations, the new centre of gravity was at last attained and became a new starting point. The grand period of English history, known to respectability under the name of "the Great Rebellion," and the struggles succeeding it, were brought to a close by the comparatively puny event entitled by Liberal historians, "the Glorious Revolution."

The new starting-point was a compromise between the rising middle class and the ex-feudal landowners. The latter, though called, as now, the aristocracy, had been long since on the way which led them to become what Louis Phillippe in France became at a much later period, "the first bourgeois of the kingdom." Fortunately for England, the old feudal barons had killed one another during the Wars of the Roses. Their successors, though mostly scions of the old families, had been so much out of the direct line of descent that they constituted quite a new body, with habits and tendencies far more bourgeois than feudal. They fully understood the value of money, and at once began to increase their rents by turning hundreds of small farmers out and replacing them by sheep. Henry VIII, while squandering the Church lands, created

fresh bourgeois landlords by wholesale; the innumerable confiscations of estates, regranted to absolute or relative upstarts, and continued during the whole of the seventeenth century, had the same result. Consequently, ever since Henry VII, the English "aristocracy," far from counteracting the development of industrial production, had, on the contrary, sought to indirectly profit thereby; and there had always been a section of the great landowners willing, from economical or political reasons, to co-operate with the leading men of the financial and industrial bourgeoisie. The compromise of 1689 was, therefore, easily accomplished. The political spoils of "pelf and place" were left to the great landowning families, provided the economic interests of the financial, manufacturing, and commercial middle class were sufficiently attended to. And these economic interests were at that time powerful enough to determine the general policy of the nation. There might be squabbles about matters of detail, but, on the whole, the aristocratic oligarchy knew too well that its own economic prosperity was irretrievably bound up with that of the industrial and commercial middle class. \*

From that time, the bourgeoisie was a humble, but still a recognised component of the ruling classes of England. With the rest of them, it had a common interest in keeping in subjection the great working mass of the nation. The merchant or manufacturer himself stood in the position of master or, as it was until lately called of "natural superior" to his clerks, his workpeople, his domestic servants.

His interest was to get as much and as good work out of them as he could; for this end they had to be trained to proper submission. He was himself religious; his religion had supplied the standard under which he had fought the king and the lords; he was not long in discovering the opportunities this same religion offered him for working upon the minds of his natural inferiors, and making them submissive to the behests of the masters it had pleased God to place over them. In short, the English bourgeoisie now had to take a part in keeping down the "lower orders," the great producing mass of the nation, and one of the means employed for that purpose was the influence of religion.

There was another fact that contributed to strengthen the religious leanings of the bourgeoisie. That was the rise of materialism in England. This new doctrine not only shocked the pious feelings of the middle class, it announced itself as a philosophy only fit for scholars and cultivated men of the world, in contrast to religion which was good enough for the uneducated masses, including the bourgeoisie. With Hobbes it stepped on the stage as a defender of royal prerogative and omnipotence; it called upon absolute monarchy to keep down that *puer robustus sed malitiosus*, to wit, the people. Similarly, with the successors of Hobbes, with Bolingbroke, Shaftesbury, etc., the new deistic form of materialism remained an aristocratic, esoteric doctrine, and, therefore, hateful to the middle class, both for its religious heresy and for its anti-bourgeois political connections. Accordingly, in opposition to the mater-

ialism and deism of the aristocracy, those Protestant sects which had furnished the flag and the fighting contingent against the Stuarts, continued to furnish the main strength of the progressive middle class, and form even to-day the backbone of "the Great Liberal Party."

In the meantime materialism passed from England to France, where it met and coalesced with another materialistic school of philosophers, a branch of Cartesianism. In France, too, it remained at first an exclusively aristocratic doctrine. But soon its revolutionary character asserted itself. The French materialists did not limit their criticism to matters of religious belief; they extended it to whatever scientific tradition or political institution they met with; and to prove the claim of their doctrine to universal application, they took the shortest cut and boldly applied it to all subjects of knowledge in the giant work after which they were named—the *Encyclopedic*. Thus, in one or the other of its two forms—avowed materialism or deism—it became the creed of the whole cultured youth of France; so much so that, when the great Revolution broke out, the doctrine hatched by English Royalists gave a theoretical flag to French Republicans and Terrorists, and furnished the text for the Declaration of the Rights of Man. The great French Revolution was the third uprising of the bourgeoisie, but the first that had entirely cast off the religious cloak, and was fought out on undisguised political lines; it was the first, too, that was really fought out up to the destruction of one of the com-

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batants, the aristocracy, and the complete triumph of the other, the bourgeoisie. In England the continuity of pre-revolutionary and post revolutionary institutions, and the compromise between landlords and capitalists, found its expression in the continuity of judicial precedents and in the religious preservation of the feudal forms of the law. In France the Revolution constituted a complete breach with the traditions of the past; it cleared out the very last vestiges of feudalism, and created in the *code civil* a masterly adaptation of the old Roman law—that almost perfect expression of the juridical relations corresponding to the economic stage called by Marx the production of commodities—to modern capitalistic conditions; so masterly that this French revolutionary code still serves as a model for reforms of the law of property in all other countries, not excepting England. Let us, however, not forget that if English law continues to express the economic relations of capitalistic society in that barbarous feudal language which corresponds to the thing expressed just as English spelling corresponds to English pronunciation—*vous écrivez Londres et vous prononcez Constantinople*, said a Frenchman (you write London and you pronounce it Constantinople)—that same English law is the only one which has preserved through ages, and transmitted to America and the Colonies the best part of that old Germanic personal freedom, local self-government, and independence from all interference but that of the law courts, which on the Continent has been lost during the period of absolute monarchy, and has

nowhere been as yet fully recovered.

To return to our British bourgeois. The French Revolution gave him a splendid opportunity, with the help of the Continental monarchies, to destroy French maritime commerce, to annex French colonies, and to crush the last French pretensions to maritime rivalry. That was one reason why he fought it. Another was that the ways of this revolution went very much against his grain. Not only its "execrable" terrorism, but the very attempt to carry bourgeois rule to extremes. What should the British bourgeois do without its aristocracy, that taught him manners, such as they were, and invented fashions for him—that furnished officers for the army, which kept order at home, and the navy, which conquered colonial possessions and new markets abroad? There was indeed a progressive minority of the bourgeoisie, that minority whose interests were not so well attended to under the compromise; this section, composed chiefly of the less wealthy middle class, did sympathise with the Revolution, but it was powerless in Parliament.

Thus, if materialism became the creed of the French Revolution, the God-fearing English bourgeois held all the faster to his religion. Had not the reign of terror in Paris proved what was the upshot, if the religious instincts of the masses were lost? The more materialism spread from France to neighbouring countries, and was reinforced by similar doctrinal currents, notably by German philosophy, the more, in fact, materialism and free-thought, generally became, on the Continent, the necessary

qualifications of a cultivated man, the more stubbornly the English middle class stuck to its manifold religious creeds. These creeds might differ from one another, but they were, all of them, distinctly religious, Christian creeds.

While the Revolution insured the political triumph of the bourgeoisie in France, in England Watt, Arkwright, Cartwright, and others, initiated an industrial revolution which completely shifted the centre of gravity of economic power. The wealth of the bourgeoisie increased considerably faster than that of the landed aristocracy. Within the bourgeoisie itself, the financial aristocracy, the bankers, etc., were more and more pushed into the background by the manufacturers. The compromise of 1689, even after the gradual changes it had undergone in favour of the bourgeoisie, no longer corresponded to the relative position of the parties to it. The character of these parties, too, had changed; the bourgeoisie of 1830 was very different from that of the preceding century. The political power still left to the aristocracy, and used by them to resist the pretensions of the new industrial bourgeoisie, became incompatible with the new economic interests. A fresh struggle with the aristocracy was necessary; it could end only in a victory of the new economic power. First, the Reform Act was pushed through, in spite of all resistance, under the impulse of the French Revolution of 1830. It gave to the bourgeoisie a recognised and powerful place in Parliament. Then the Repeal of the Corn Laws, which settled, once for all, the supre-

macy of the bourgeoisie, and especially of its most active portion, the manufacturers, over the landed aristocracy. This was the greatest victory of the bourgeoisie; it was, however, also the last it gained in its own exclusive interest. Whatever triumphs it obtained later on, it had to share with a new social power, first its ally, but soon its rival.

The industrial revolution had created a class of large manufacturing capitalists, but also a class—and a far more numerous one—of manufacturing work-people. This class gradually increased in numbers, in proportion as the industrial revolution seized upon one branch of manufacture after another, and in the same proportion it increased in power. This power it proved as early as 1824, by forcing a reluctant Parliament to repeal the acts forbidding combinations of workmen. During the Reform agitation, the workingmen constituted the Radical wing of the Reform party; the Act of 1832 having excluded them from the suffrage, they formulated their demands in the People's Charter, and constituted themselves in opposition to the great bourgeois Anti-Corn Law party, into an independent party, the Chartists, the first workingmen's party of modern times.

Then came the Continental revolutions of February and March, 1848, in which the working people played such a prominent part, and, at least in Paris, put forward demands which were certainly inadmissible from the point of view of capitalist society. And then came the general reaction. First the defeat of the Chartists on the 10th of April,

1848, then the crushing of the Paris workingmen's insurrection in June of the same year, then the disasters of 1849 in Italy, Hungary, South Germany, and at last the victory of Louis Bonaparte over Paris, 2nd December, 1851. For a time, at least, the bugbear of working class pretensions was put down, but at what cost! If the British bourgeois had been convinced before of the necessity of maintaining the common people in a religious mood, how much more must he feel that necessity after all these experiences? Regardless of the sneers of his Continental compeers, he continued to spend thousands and tens of thousands, year after year, upon the evangelisation of the lower orders; not content with his own native religious machinery, he appealed to Brother Jonathan, the greatest organiser in existence of religion as a trade, and imported from America revivalism, Moody and Sankey, and the like; and, finally, he accepted the dangerous aid of the Salvation Army, which revives the propaganda of early Christianity, appeals to the poor as the elect, fights capitalism in a religious way, and thus fosters an element of early Christian class antagonism, which one day may become troublesome to the well-to-do people who now find the ready money for it.

It seems a law of historical development that the bourgeoisie can in no European country get hold of political power—at least for any length of time—in the same exclusive way in which the feudal aristocracy kept hold of it during the Middle Ages. Even in France, where feudalism was completely extinguished, the bourgeoisie, as a whole, has held

full possession of the Government for very short periods only. During Louis Phillippe's reign, 1830-48, a very small portion of the bourgeoisie ruled the kingdom; by far the larger part were excluded from the suffrage by the high qualification. Under the second Republic, 1848-51, the whole bourgeoisie ruled, but for three years only; their incapacity brought on the second Empire. It is only now, in the third Republic, that the bourgeoisie as a whole have kept possession of the helm for more than twenty years; and they are already showing lively signs of decadence. A durable reign of the bourgeoisie has been possible only in countries like America, where feudalism was unknown, and society at the very beginning started from a bourgeois basis. And even in France and America, the successors of the bourgeoisie, the working people, are already knocking at the door.

In England, the bourgeoisie never held undivided sway. Even the victory of 1832 left the landed aristocracy in almost exclusive possession of all the leading Government offices. The meekness with which the wealthy middle class submitted to this, remained inconceivable to me until the great Liberal manufacturer, Mr. W. A. Forster, in a public speech implored the young men of Bradford to learn French, as a means to get on in the world, and quoted from his own experience how sheepish he looked when, as a Cabinet Minister, he had to move in society where French was, at least, as necessary as English. The fact was, the English middle class of that time were, as a rule, quite uneducated

upstarts, and could not help leaving to the aristocracy those superior Government places where other qualifications were required than insular narrowness and insular conceit, seasoned by business sharpness.<sup>1</sup> Even now the endless newspaper debates about middle class education show that the English middle class does not yet consider itself good enough for the best education, and looks to something more modest. Thus, even after the

<sup>1</sup> And even in business matters, the conceit of national Chauvinism is but a sorry adviser. Up to quite recently, the average English manufacturer considered it derogatory from an Englishman to speak any language but his own, and felt rather proud than otherwise of the fact that "poor devils" of foreigners settled in England and took off his hands the trouble of disposing of his products abroad. He never noticed that these foreigners, mostly Germans, thus got command of a very large part of British foreign trade, imports and exports, and that the direct foreign trade of Englishmen became limited, almost entirely, to the colonies, China, the United States, and South America. Nor did he notice that these Germans traded with other Germans abroad, who gradually organised a complete network of commercial colonies all over the world. But when Germany, about forty years ago, seriously began manufacturing for export, this network served her admirably in her transformation, in so short a time, from a corn-exporting into a first-rate manufacturing country. Then, about ten years go, the British manufacturer got frightened, and asked his ambassadors and consuls how it was that he could no longer keep his customers together. The unanimous answer was: (1) You don't learn your customer's language, but expect him to speak your own; (2) You don't even try to suit your customer's wants, habits, and tastes, but expect him to conform to your English ones.

Repeal of the Corn Laws, it appeared a matter of course, that the men who had carried the day, the Cobdens, Brights, Forsters, etc., should remain excluded from a share in the official government of the country, until, twenty years afterwards, a new Reform Act opened to them the door of the Cabinet. The English bourgeoisie are, up to the present day, so deeply penetrated by a sense of their social inferiority that they keep up, at their own expense and that of the nation, an ornamental caste of drones to represent the nation worthily at all State functions; and they consider themselves highly honoured whenever one of themselves is found worthy of admission into this select and privileged body, manufactured, after all, by themselves.

The industrial and commercial middle class had, therefore, not yet succeeded in driving the landed aristocracy completely from political power, when another competitor, the working class, appeared on the stage. The reaction after the Chartist movement and the Continental revolutions, as well as the unparalleled extension of English trade from 1848 to 1866 (ascribed vulgarly to Free Trade alone, but due far more to the colossal development of railways, ocean steamers, and means of intercourse generally), had again driven the working class into the dependency of the Liberal Party, of which they formed, as in pre-Chartist times, the Radical wing. Their claims to the franchise, however, gradually became irresistible; while the Whig leaders of the Liberals "funked," Disraeli showed his superiority by making the Tories seize the favourable moment and



introduce household suffrage in the boroughs, along with a redistribution of seats. Then followed the ballot; then in 1884 the extension of household suffrage to the counties and a fresh redistribution of seats, by which electoral districts were to some extent equalised. All these measures considerably increased the electoral power of the working class, so much so that in at least one hundred and fifty to two hundred constituencies that class now furnishes the majority of voters. But Parliamentary government is a capital school for teaching respect for tradition; if the middle class look with awe and veneration upon what Lord John Manners playfully called "our old nobility," the mass of the working people then looked up with respect and deference to what used to be designated as "their betters," the middle class. Indeed, the British workman, some fifteen years ago, was the model workman, whose respectful regard for the position of his master, and whose self-restraining modesty in claiming rights for himself, consoled our German economists of the *Katheder-Socialist* school for the incurable communistic and revolutionary tendencies of their own workmen at home.

But the English middle class—good men of business as they are—saw farther than the German professors. They had shared their power but reluctantly with the working class. They had learned, during the Chartist years, what that *puer robustus sed malitiosus*, the people, is capable of. And since that time, they had been compelled to incorporate the better part of the People's Charter in the Statutes of

the United Kingdom. Now, if ever, the people must be kept in order by moral means, and the first and foremost of all moral means of action upon the masses is and remains—religion. Hence the parson's majorities on the School Boards, hence the increasing self-taxation of the bourgeoisie for the support of all sorts of revivalism, from ritualism to the Salvation Army.

And now came the triumph of British respectability over the free-thought and religious laxity of the Continental bourgeois. The workmen of France and Germany had become rebellious. They were thoroughly infected with socialism, and, for very good reasons, were not at all particular as to the legality of the means by which to secure their own ascendancy. The *puer robustus*, here, turned from day to day more *malitiosus*. Nothing remained to the French and German bourgeoisie as a last resource but to silently drop their free-thought, as a youngster, when sea-sickness creeps upon him, quietly drops the burning cigar he brought swaggeringly on board; one by one, the scoffers turned pious in outward behaviour, spoke with respect of the Church, its dogmas and rites, and even conformed with the latter as far as could not be helped. French bourgeoisie dined *maigre* on Fridays, and German ones sat out long Protestant sermons in their pews on Sundays. They had come to grief with materialism. "*Die Religion muss dem Volk erhalten werden,*"—religion must be kept alive for the people—that was the only and the last means to save society from utter ruin. Unfortunately for themselves, they did

not find this out until they had done their level best to break up religion for ever. And now it was the turn of the British bourgeois to sneer and to say: "~~Why~~ Why, you fools, I could have told you that two hundred years ago!"

However, I am afraid neither the religious stolidity of the British, nor the *post festum* conversion of the Continental bourgeois will stem the rising Proletarian tide. Tradition is a great retarding force, is the *vis inertiae* of history, but, being merely passive, is sure to be broken down; and thus religion will be no lasting safeguard to capitalist society. If our juridical, philosophical, and religious ideas are the more or less remote offshoots of the economic relations prevailing in a given society, such ideas cannot, in the long run, withstand the effects of a complete change in these relations. And, unless we believe in supernatural revelation, we must admit that no religious tenets will ever suffice to prop up a tottering society.

In fact, in England, too, the working people have begun to move again. They are, no doubt, shackled by traditions of various kinds. Bourgeois traditions, such as the widespread belief that there can be but two parties, Conservatives and Liberals, and that the working class must work out its salvation by and through the great Liberal Party. Workingmen's traditions, inherited from their first tentative efforts at independent action, such as the exclusion, from ever so many old Trade Unions, of all applicants who have not gone through a regular apprenticeship; which means the breeding,

by every such union, of its own blacklegs. But for all that the English working class is moving, as even Professor Brentano has sorrowfully had to report to his brother Katheder-Socialists. It moves, like all things in England, with a slow and measured step, with hesitation here, with more or less unfruitful, tentative attempts there; it moves now and then with an over-cautious mistrust of the name of Socialism, while it gradually absorbs the substance; and the movement spreads and seizes one layer of the workers after another. It has now shaken out of their torpor the unskilled labourers of the East End of London, and we all know what a splendid impulse these fresh forces have given it in return. And if the pace of the movement is not up to the impatience of some people, let them not forget that it is the working class which keeps alive the finest qualities of the English character, and that, if a step in advance is once gained in England, it is, as a rule, never lost afterwards. If the sons of the old Chartists, for reasons explained above, were not quite up to the mark, the grandsons bid fair to be worthy of their forefathers.

But the triumph of the European working class does not depend upon England alone. It can only be secured by the co-operation of, at least, England, France, and Germany. In both the latter countries the working class movement is well ahead of England. In Germany it is even within measurable distance of success. The progress it has there made during the last twenty-five years is unparalleled. It advances with ever-increasing velocity. If the

German middle class have shown themselves lamentably deficient in political capacity, discipline, courage, energy, and perseverance, the German working class have given ample proof of all these qualities. Four hundred years ago, Germany was the starting-point of the first upheaval of the European middle class; as things are now, is it outside the limits of possibility that Germany will be the scene, too, of the first great victory of the European proletariat?

## APPENDIX

### I

#### MARX'S THESES ON FEUERBACH

(Jotted down in Brussels in the spring of 1845)

### I

The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism—that of Feuerbach included—is that the object, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the *object* or *contemplation*<sup>1</sup> but not as *human sensuous activity, practice*, not subjectively. Thus it happened that the *active* side, in opposition to materialism, was developed by idealism—but only abstractly, since, of course, idealism does not know real sensuous activity as such. Feuerbach wants sensuous objects, really differentiated from the thought-objects, but he does not conceive human activity itself as activity *through objects*. Consequently, in the *Essence of Christianity*, he regards the theoretical attitude as the only genuinely human attitude, while practice is conceived and fixed only in its dirty-Jewish form of appearance. Hence he does not grasp the significance of “revolutionary,” of practical-critical, activity.

<sup>1</sup> German—*Anschauung*.—Ed.

## II

The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question. In practice man must prove the truth, *i.e.*, the reality and power, the 'this-sidedness' of his thinking. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking which is isolated from practice is a purely scholastic question.

## III

The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing and that, therefore, changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that circumstances are changed precisely by men and that the educator must himself be educated. Hence this doctrine necessarily arrives at dividing society into two parts, of which one towers above society (in Robert Owen, for example).

The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity can only be conceived and rationally understood as revolutionising practice.

## IV

Feuerbach starts out from the fact of religious self-alienation, the duplication of the world into a religious, imaginary world and a real one. His work consists in the dissolution of the religious

world into its secular basis. He overlooks the fact that after completing this work, the chief thing still remains to be done. For the fact that the secular foundation lifts itself above itself and establishes itself in the clouds as an independent realm is only to be explained by the self-cleavage and self-contradictoriness of this secular basis. The latter must itself, therefore, first be understood in its contradiction and then, by the removal of the contradiction, revolutionised in practice. Thus, for instance, once the earthly family is discovered to be the secret of the holy family, the former must then itself be theoretically criticised and radically changed in practice.

## V

Feuerbach, not satisfied with *abstract thinking*, appeals to *sensuous contemplation*, but he does not conceive sensuousness as a practical, human-sensuous activity.

## VI

Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the human. But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the *ensemble* of the social relations.

Feuerbach, who does not attempt the criticism of this real essence, is consequently compelled:

1. To abstract from the historical process and to fix the religious sentiment as something for



itself and to presuppose an abstract—*isolated*—human individual.

2. The human essence, therefore, can with him be comprehended only as “genus,” as a dumb internal generality which merely *naturally* unites the many individuals.

## VII

Feuerbach, consequently, does not see that the “religious sentiment” is itself a *social product*, and that the abstract individual whom he analyses belongs in reality to a particular form of society.

## VIII

Social life is essentially *practical*. All mysteries which mislead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice.

## IX

The highest point attained by contemplative materialism, *i.e.* materialism which does not understand sensuousness as practical activity, is the outlook of single individuals in “civil society.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Here not “bourgeois society,” but “civil society” (bürgerliche Gesellschaft), as in Hegel, in the sense of the totality of social (economic, personal, cultural, etc.) relations, as distinguished from the political organism, the state.—*Ed.*

## X

The standpoint of the old materialism is “civil society”; the standpoint of the new is *human* society or socialised humanity.

## XI

The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point however is to *change* it.

## II

### AN EXCERPT FROM THE PREFACE TO MARX'S "CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY" (1857)

The first work which I undertook for the purpose of solving the doubts which perplexed me was a critical re-examination of Hegel's Philosophy of Law. The introduction to this work appeared in the German-French Year Books, published at Paris in 1844. My investigation ended in the conviction that legal relations and forms of government cannot be explained either by themselves or by the so-called development of the human mind, but, on the contrary, have their roots in the conditions of men's physical existence, whose totality Hegel, following the English and French writers of the eighteenth century, summed up under the name of civil society; and that the anatomy of civil society must be sought in political economy, to which study I next gave my attention.

The general result which I arrived at and which, once obtained, served as a guide for my subsequent studies, can be briefly formulated as follows:—

In making their livelihood together men enter into certain necessary involuntary relations with each other.

These industrial relations arise out of their respective conditions and occupations and correspond to whatever stage society has reached in the development of its material productive forces.

Different stages of industry produce different relations.

The totality of these industrial relations constitutes the economic structure and basis of society.

Upon this basis the legal and political superstructure is built.

There are certain forms of social consciousness or so-called public opinion which correspond to this basis.

The method prevailing in any society of producing the material livelihood determines the social, political, and intellectual life of men in general.

It is not primarily men's consciousness which determines their mode of life: on the contrary, it is their social life which determines their consciousness.

When the material productive forces of society have advanced to a certain stage of their development they come into opposition with the old conditions of production, or, to use a legal expression, with the old property relations, under which these forces have hitherto been exerted.

Instead of serving longer as institutions for the development of the productive powers of society, these antiquated property relations now become hindrances. Then begins an epoch of social revolution.

With the change of the economic basis the

whole vast super-structure undergoes, sooner or later, a revolution.

In considering such revolutions we must always distinguish clearly between the change in the industrial methods of social production on the one hand; this change takes place unconsciously, strictly according to the laws of natural science, and might properly be called an evolution.

And, on the other hand, the change in the legal, political, religious, artistical or philosophical, in short, ideological, institutions, with reference to these men fight out this conflict as a revolution conscious of their opposing interests.

This conflict takes the form of a class struggle.

As little as we judge an individual by what he himself thinks he is, just as little can we judge such a revolutionary epoch by its own consciousness.

We must rather explain this consciousness out of the antagonisms of men's industrial occupations, out of the conflict existing between the productive capacity of social industry and the legal institutions under which this industry is carried on.

A society, no matter what its form may be, is never broken up until all the productive powers are developed for which it is adapted.

New and higher social institutions are never established until the material conditions of life to support them have been prepared in the lap of the old society itself.

Therefore, mankind never sets for itself any tasks, except those for which it has received the pro-

per training and which it is able to perform.

If we examine closely, it will always be found that the conflict itself never arises except where the material conditions of its solution are already at hand, or at least are in the process of growth.

We may in wide outlines characterise the Asiatic, the antique, the feudal and the modern capitalistic methods of production as a series of progressive epochs in the evolution of economic society.

The industrial relations arising out of the capitalist method of production constitute the last of the antagonistic forms of social production; antagonistic not in the sense of an antagonism between individuals, but of an antagonism growing out of the circumstances in which men must live who take part in social production.

But the productive forces which are developed in the lap of capitalist society create at the same time the material conditions needed for the abolition of this antagonism. The capitalist form of society, therefore, will bring to a close this cycle of the history of human society, as it has existed under the various forms of exploitation.